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THE

PERSECUTION OF DIOCLETIAN.

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THE

PERSECUTION OF DIOCLETIAN

A HISTORICAL ESSAY

BY

ARTHUR JAMES MASON M.A.

FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE.

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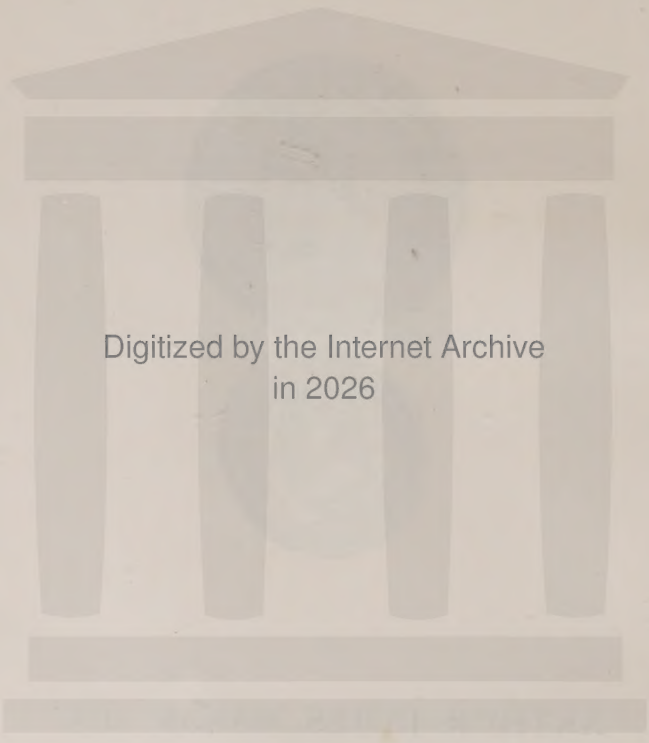

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TO

GEORGE WILLIAM MASON ESQUIRE

OF MORTON HALL

ARE DUTIFULLY DEDICATED

THE FIRSTFRUITS OF HIS SON'S STUDIES.

Now is come salvation and strength,
and the Kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ;
for the accuser of our brethren is cast down,
which accused them before our God day and night.
And they overcame him by the Blood of the Lamb,
and by the word of their testimony,
and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Nox et tenebrae et nubila,
confusa mundi et turbida,
lux intrat, albescit polus,
Christus uenit, discedite.

PREFACE.

A roughly sketched fragment, of which the present volume is the development and completion, received from the judges the award of the Hulsean Essay Prize in 1874. It is with the aid of Mr Hulse's Benefaction that the work is now published: and the author has to thank those who selected the subject for having first set him to work upon this most interesting period.

My book ventures, contrary to an established etiquette, to pretend to something not unlike originality. Of course, but few new 'facts' have been disclosed. There are not many 'facts'—in that limited sense of the word which excludes all that is inward, all that turns a string of events into History—still left to be discovered in any historical field: they are as rare as gold-nuggets. But I have made a real effort to understand for myself, what the 'facts' which are everybody's property mean, without following any previous author. No English writer of any

eminence has made a special study of the great crisis, though Dean Milman shows careful thought and a just appreciation of the Persecution as a whole; and Gibbon is always masterly. Far the best account of the period that I know, is in the Duke de Broglie's exquisite book, *L'Église et l'Empire;* but this too is only a cursory description. To several of the German authors I owe a great deal; in fact to one—Pfarrer Hunziker—I am head over ears in debt for his book *zur Regierung und Christenverfolgung des Kaisers Diocletianus und seiner Nachfolger.* He has furnished me not only with many useful references and much carefully worked chronology, but also to some extent with my method, and with many suggestions which I have used. But it will be found that I very rarely agree with Mr Hunziker, or with any of the German scholars, to whom I endeavour to state my obligations in the notes. The laborious erudition of Tillemont presents the grateful student with every shred of information that can be gathered from antiquity: but no historian could call him master.

The chief novelties in this book may be briefly mentioned, with a view to their confirmation or exposure in the interests of truth. They are as follows: —the notion that Constantine's Church policy was a fulfilment of Diocletian's design; the modelling of Diocletian's Persecution after that of Valerian (together with the contrast shown between Valerian's

and Decius' efforts); the proof that Diocletian had nothing to do with the so called Fourth Edict; his conduct at the Abdication newly explained; the true dating of the Manichaean Edict; the demolishing of Constantine's supposed Second Act of Toleration; and a number of lesser points. My view of the character of the great Emperor is, I trust, not wholly new: only in the present year, I was glad to observe, the *British Quarterly Magazine* contained an article by Mr Freeman, in which something like justice was done to Diocletian's memory. The admirable portraits on the title-page will show something of the difference between his colleague and himself; though it must be owned that the unflattering likeness of Maximian (which does not bear out his description in John Malalas) was coined in the place where Maximian was best hated, at Rome.

MORTON, *October*, 1876.

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THE PERSECUTION OF DIOCLETIAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE SECOND AUGUSTUS.

> Much more do Commonwealths acknowledge thee,
> And wrap their Policies in thy Decree,
> Complying with thy Counsels, doing nought
> Which doth not meet with an eternal Thought.
>
> GEORGE HERBERT.

THE accession of the Emperor Diocletian is the era from which the Coptic Churches of Egypt and Abyssinia still date, under the name of the 'Era of Martyrs.' All former persecutions of the faith were forgotten in the horror with which men looked back upon the last and greatest: the tenth wave (as men delighted to count it) of that great storm obliterated all the traces that had been left by others. The fiendish cruelty of Nero, the jealous fears of Domitian, the unimpassioned dislike of Marcus, the sweeping purpose of Decius, the clever devices of Valerian, fell into obscurity when compared with the concentrated terrors of that final grapple, which resulted in the destruction of the old Roman Empire and the establishment of the Cross as the symbol of the world's hope.

In the year 283, on or about the very day when the Church, at any rate in the West, had already learned to

celebrate the Birthday of the Saviour, the Emperor Carus died in the remote East, in the midst of a most prosperous campaign against the Persians. His death was attended with a mysteriousness which baffled the scrutiny even of those who were nearest to his person. His own private secretary has left us an account of the occurrence, which suffers us to entertain any of three several views with regard to the immediate cause. The writer himself professes to believe that Carus died in the ordinary course of nature, of a disease, unnamed, from which he was suffering at the time. But it happened in the midst of a most violent thunderstorm, which created such confusion that nothing distinct could be afterwards ascertained, except that, immediately after the thunderclap which made most impression upon the multitude, arose a cry that the Emperor was dead, and at the same time the imperial tent was seen to be in flames. The eye-witness of the scene without any misgiving asserts that the Emperor's valets—not the lightning—had set the pavilion on fire; and that they did so in their 'frantic grief,'—grief, presumably, at finding Carus dead already of his sickness. This, he says, occasioned a belief that the Emperor was killed by lightning—the belief of Eutropius and all later authors. It was from that day that Diocletian dated his own reign. Some have thought that the great general was indeed lying sick, from the effects of poison; that the moment of the thunderstorm presented a good opportunity for cutting short the work; that the tent was really set on fire to blind men with regard to the real cause; and that the instigator was Diocletian. It was far more likely the work of Arrius Aper.

Eight months later, when the victorious army, either panic-smitten at this strange misfortune, or unable to proceed

because of the incompetency of its leaders[1], had arrived on the shores of the Bosporus again, it was found out that Numerianus, the gentle and virtuous younger son of Carus, was dead, and had lain some time dead, in the camp at Perinthus. He had been in feeble health, and suffering, it was thought, from bad eyes. Arrius Aper, prefect of the Prætorians, had been canvassing to succeed his son-in-law whenever the vacancy should occur, and had actually been giving the orders during the young Emperor's illness. He was now brought in chains before a court-martial at Chalcedon. Diocles (such was Diocletian's name while he was yet a subject), who presided in this council, had been Prefect of the corps which guarded immediately the Emperor's person. If we acquit Diocletian of complicity in the murder, we accuse him of the most culpable carelessness at his post. Aper was his most formidable rival. It seems difficult to doubt that he had suffered Aper to destroy Numerian and helped to conceal his death, and had then informed against him. Lifting his eyes to the sun (the emblem of divinity) Diocles protested his own innocence,—a clear indication that Aper had endeavoured to asperse it ;—and then pronouncing solemnly, as if on his own personal knowledge, that the prisoner was the murderer of Numerian, he executed the sentence of death upon him with his own hand,—a clear indication that Aper could have proved his charge. "Be proud, O Aper," he cried, as he stabbed him to the heart: "thou fallest by the hand of great Aeneas[2]."

[1] Or their ambitious desire to be nearer the centre of the empire.

[2] Quoting the Aeneid x. 830. Aurelius Victor makes him add the solemn lie, that he had never been desirous of empire. I am glad to find that Mr Brunner takes the same view of Diocletian's share in these deaths (*Vopiscus Lebensbeschreibungen*, p. 104).

Human life was at this time considered of so little moment, and the life of an Emperor so fair a mark, that even if this surmise be true, we should hardly think of reckoning it as a serious crime against a man like Diocletian. He was no common assassin. But whatever we may think of his guilt, his vigorous behaviour towards Aper, and the circumstances which led to it, ought to be well considered by those who would form a just opinion of his character. We have the whole story on the distinguished authority of the grandfather of Vopiscus the historian, an intimate personal friend of the great Emperor, from the time when he served as a private under Claudius to the days when he refreshed himself after his twenty years of labour in the proud retirement of Spalatro. Many years before, a certain Druidess who kept a little shop at Tongres had the honour of entertaining the future Augustus as her lodger. One day, as he was paying her his bill, she rebuked him for being too miserly. Diocles answered with the natural banter of a young legionary that he would be liberal enough when he was Emperor,—a promise, it must be owned, which he hardly kept. The woman told him it was no matter for a jest, for Emperor he should be, when once he had killed the Boar, *Aper*. Diocles was conscious of the promptings of ambition, and had already avowed his passion both to Vopiscus' grandfather and to Maximian, afterwards the colleague of his empire. He was struck with the woman's words. Arrius Aper was probably already a conspicuous officer, well known by name to Diocles and his comrades, who might some day be a competitor for the purple. It is characteristic of Diocletian that all through his lifetime he believed himself to be the object of a special destiny, whose workings were

sometimes discoverable in advance. However, on the present occasion, Vopiscus says, "as he was a deep man, he laughed and said nothing[1]." He had a long while to wait. Aurelian, Tacitus, Probus, Carus, all took their turns before him; but Diocles was patient. On one such occasion he remarked drily to his confidant, "I always kill the Boar, but some one else has the benefit of the carcase[2]." It was a well-known story that when at last the opportunity was presented, and Diocletian had avenged (as men thought) the murder of Numerian, he said aloud, "I have killed the mysterious Boar at last." Diocletian's old friend was fond of repeating to his grandson the historian, how the Emperor had told him "that he had no other reason for killing Aper with his own hand, but to fulfil the Druidess's saying, and confirm his own empire: for he would not have wished to get the repute of being so cruel, especially in the first days of his power, had not the necessity of fate driven him to this harsh act of slaughter[3]."

Thus on the 17th of September, 284, Diocletian was elected by the assembled generals to fill the throne of the master who had been put aside. Early in the following year[4] the battle of Margus easily got rid of all opposition from the West, by the death of the abominable Carinus, who

[1] Vop. Num. 15: *ut erat altus, risit et tacuit.*

[2] Vop. Num. 15: *ego semper apros occido, sed alter utitur pulpamento.*

[3] Vop. Num. 15. Gibbon (ch. xii.) says: "The reason why Diocletian killed Aper was founded on a prophecy and a pun as foolish as they are well known." It was foolish indeed, and unlike the Emperor, if he really (as Vopiscus says) went boar-hunting expecting to get the purple as in a fairy-tale, but not if (as I think) he had marked down the right game from the first. At any rate the main facts are beyond a doubt. Cf. Bernhardt *Geschichte Roms von Valerian bis zu Diokletians Tod* I. 353, 354.

[4] Probably March: cf. Hunziker, p. 203.

was killed on the field by one of his own tribunes, whose wife he had affronted. Carinus had himself subdued the usurpation of Julianus,—and so Diocletian was left without a rival, the master of the world.

With the death of Carinus, or rather of Carus[1], closed that great period of the history of Rome, and of the world, which began with the death of Nero and the downfall of the Julian dynasty;—a period marked by every vicissitude of fortune,—in which the steady and terrible upgrowing of the army is of more historical interest than the fitful biographies of the princes who held the sceptre at its nomination or on its sufferance;—a period of utter unsettlement, when it was almost impossible to guess from year to year what hands were destined to guide the state, or to what new degradations the world might be forced to submit. Since the abject resignation and death of Philip the Arabian, a succession of warrior princes had rather led the armies of the state, than governed it internally, each elected in an arbitrary manner, and each passing away by some means or other within a very brief space.

The most curious part of the history of these chieftains, who were for the most part men of respectable character and excellent intentions[2], is the variety of their views of their own office. Several had hoped to be the regenerators of the old Republic. Decius, a notable example of those who "have greatness thrust upon them," believed that the purification of the Senate, not his own personal government, was the main hope for the empire; and to that end he

[1] It is from the earlier date that Diocletian himself reckons the beginning of his reign.

[2] With the notable exception of Gallienus, alike the cleverest and the worst.

had revived the obsolete office of the censor, and even invited the Fathers to appoint to the honourable post. He acted in the old plebeian spirit of the Decii, with no more selfish ambition than to be a trusty officer of state. Æmilian had gone so far as to make a definite arrangement with the Senate, by which he renounced all civil power while he retained entire command of the armies. Valerian, who for his virtues had been selected by the senators as their censor, appears to have taken less pains to please them as their Emperor; and though Pollio[1] very likely speaks the truth, when he asserts that, if the votes of all the world had been taken, Valerian would have been chosen Emperor, yet, as matter of fact, his election was the result of a deliberation between the chief officers of all the armies,—who rejected Æmilian (strange to say) as being too much of a soldier and too little of a prince. Claudius Gothicus, who acquired his dignity in much the same way as Valerian, behaved very respectfully, though firmly, to the Senate; but on his deathbed took the liberty to nominate his own successor, Aurelian.

The nomination was accepted by the army and consequently by the Fathers, though not without a protest for their own candidate, Quintillus. They had accepted, however, a man who cared little for their antient claims, and was unable to reconcile himself to the etiquette of the pretended commonwealth. The many rough lessons, which this bluff Illyrian taught the members of the curia, earned for him in vulgar parlance the title of "The Senators' Schoolmaster[2]." Aurelian slighted their authority on different considerations from those which had moved Valerian. This latter had himself

[1] Poll. Valer. 1. 2.

[2] Vop. Aur. 37: *paedagogum esse senatorum.*

been Princeps Senatus under the tyrant Maximin. He knew the utmost of their strength, and of their weakness. He saw that it was useless to think of restoring their supremacy. Still, he was a Roman, and a man of birth and culture, and could never allow himself to forget what the Senate had been in the days of Cato and of Cicero. But Aurelian, great general as he was, and clever man as well, was an unlettered barbarian from a distant land, whose only education had been in the camps, and who knew little and cared less about the past. The only thing which he saw very clearly was that the pretensions of the Senate, and their pedantic antiquarianism, hindered him in the free exercise of his own will. Such a body was fitted for no higher functions than to send him out pontiffs to reconsecrate the temples of Palmyra[1].

But the next two reigns were a triumph for the Senate. After the murder of Aurelian the troops actually refused to exercise the right, or rather the power, of proclaiming his successor. The "fortunate and valiant armies" wrote an epistle to the Senate and people of Rome, couched in the most reverential, obsequious terms, entreating them to send out some man whom they should deem worthy of the imperial dignity. The Senate had gained all that it could desire. But unaccustomed as they were to the exercise of any important privilege, they felt embarrassed with the proud prerogative. Vain and overjoyed with their recovered bauble, on the one hand they wrote as follows to the local senate of Carthage:— "The right of conferring supreme command, of nominating the sovereign, of bestowing the sacred style of Augustus, has returned to us. To us therefore refer whatever is important.

[1] Vop. Aur. 31: *ego* (Aurelian) *ad senatum scribam petens ut mittat pontificem qui dedicet templum.*

All appeals will now lie to the Prefect of the City, provided they are appeals from the proconsuls and the ordinary judges. At the same time we take it that *your* dignity, as well as ours, is restored to its ancient consideration, since the highest order in the state, by regaining its proper power, preserves the rights of all the rest[1]". Yet, on the other hand, they sent back word that they referred the choice of a prince to the army of Aurelian. For eight months the world was astonished to find itself a free republic, while right and might—at the distance of Rome and Bithynia—bandied these momentous compliments three times to and fro.

The self-denial of the troops at last won the day; and the Fathers appointed Tacitus, the senior senator, an antient, modest and virtuous philosopher. When he too had been assassinated, the army did not indeed renew its obliging offers to the Roman curia; but Probus, the admirable officer whom they elected, himself hastened humbly to crave the generous permission of the Senate to wear the purple with which he had been invested. They were, he said, the rightful sovereigns. He regretted that Florian, the brother of the late Emperor, had not waited for their authority before assuming the title of Augustus[2]. He insinuated that the purpose of the soldiers in

[1] Vop. Tac. 18, 19. The following private letter gives a lively view of the feelings of the senators:—"Claudius Sapilianus to his uncle Cereius Maecianus.—Honoured Sir, we have obtained what we have always longed for. The senate has come back to its antient position. We, *we* create princes; our order distributes magistracies. We have to thank the Roman army,—a really Roman army. It has restored to us the power which we have always possessed. No more of your holidays at Baiae and Puteoli! Devote yourself to the city and to the senate-house. Bravo for Rome! bravo for the whole republic! We are commissioning emperors and creating princes. We who are beginning to *do*, are able also to *forbid*:—a word's enough to the wise."—Alas for the wisdom of the remark itself!

[2] Florian's was the merest usurpation: he had not even the semi-constitutional suffrage of the officers.

electing himself was to punish this infringement of the senatorial rights. So splendid an apology from an Emperor was even more flattering than the homage of the generals had been. The Roman aristocracy began to think its supremacy complete and lasting. But within six years the legions grew weary of the peaceful austerity of Probus' discipline. He was forced to go the way of all Roman Emperors, and into his place was thrust, by the mutinous common soldiers who had killed him, a senator indeed but no friend of the Senate, Carus. That antient assembly was no longer to have any influence upon the destiny of the world. Carus addressed to it no apologies, and no thanks. He told its members in plain language that he was now their sovereign, and bade them be thankful that the honour had fallen upon one of their own nation and of their own order.

But as Probus was the last who acknowledged his obligations to the Senate, so Carus was the last nominee of a tumultuary army. He now made way for one who was to establish an orderly government and a fixed, though novel method of succession;—one who gave himself to the improvement of the countries already beneath his sway, while he did not neglect the necessity of impressing the prestige of the Roman arms on those who yet lay outside the empire;—one who seems in a sense to be almost the transition from antient history to modern, and at any rate prepared for that transition, which may justly be said to have taken place under his great successor Constantine. Diocletian has never been better described than when Gibbon calls him a second Augustus, the founder of a new empire.

He was the Founder of a New Empire;—not the restorer of an old. Diocletian can in no wise be conceived of as a

reformer, in the sense of that word which implies a recurrence to that which is primitive. He was far too great a statesman to attempt a retrogression : a prodigious stride in advance was what he took [1].

For in the first place a retrogression to Senatorial government would have been impossible. A worthy captain like Decius, with a peculiar ancestral reputation to keep up, might attempt to restore the old constitution, but not an enlightened modern-minded politician. For firstly the empire was no longer in any real sense Roman. Rome happened to be the germ and the antient capital of the empire ; but the dominions stretched from the Tigris to the Clyde. The wealthiest members of the commonwealth were not Romans but Spaniards : the most learned and eloquent were trained in the schools of Autun and of Carthage : far the most able and powerful were the hardy and vigorous races of Dalmatia and Pannonia. And in fact the senators were no longer even the representatives of the burghers of Rome : for since the sensible edict of the senseless Caracallus, any free man from Antioch to Lisbon enjoyed the franchise equally with the descendants of the Pisos. A few Pisos were the last relics of the old Roman *gentes :* for the modern senators were either foreigners, or else descended from their Roman ancestors through many generations of illegitimacy. To bring back legislative and executive powers into the hands of a few rich old gentlemen, merely because they happened to live in Rome, would have been as absurd, at that date, as it would be now to entrust the government of the British Isles, with India, Canada, and Australia,

[1] The extreme importance of this observation will be seen in the next chapter but one.

to the mayor and corporation of the Confessor's capital of Winchester.

It would have been still more preposterous. An Emperor could not have tried to become the servant of the Senate, without ignoring the most noticeable feature in the whole political landscape. The Army was now no longer what it had been[1]. According to the original theory of the Roman army it was a muster of the Quirites for war. Roman citizenship alone gave men the honourable privilege of fighting in the legions. In the pressure which was felt after the battle of Lake Trasimene, some were recruited whose freedom was only acquired: but the innovation was so grave, that the recruiting officers restricted their choice to those freedmen only who had children in Rome to be their hostages[2]. And so soon as peace was restored, the good citizens went again to their homes and the legions ceased to be. As long as the army could accept this theory of its own existence, senatorial government was natural enough. But under the Cæsars a standing army had been formed, which had gradually become less and less Roman. And now these soldiers were supreme. They had interfered in the highest political matters, and would interfere again. Their interests—and they were strong enough to look after them—were quite distinct from the interests of civilians. If the responsibilities of government had again been laid upon the conscript Fathers, they would have been in a perpetual dilemma. For, on the one hand, without these vast hosts upon the frontiers, the Senate could not have existed. The Goths and Burgundians, the Carpi and the Persians, would have been fighting together on the Appian

[1] See Richter, *das weströmische Reich*, p. 33.

[2] Livy, XXII. 11.

Road and in the Forum. And yet, unless these troops were dissolved, the Senate could never be obeyed. The legions, formed of all nations under heaven[1], would never submit to an unwarlike council composed of the magnates of a single city. The only conceivable aristocracy that could have governed the world, by governing the soldiery, would have been a council of the highest officers of the army[2].

And if it was impossible to return to a republican regimen, so was it also inexpedient and mischievous to retain those fictions by which the Empire was disguised. Diocletian no more sought to reproduce the empire of Augustus and Tiberius, than the commonwealth of the Gracchi or of Brutus. If the world was to be delivered from anarchy, and from the cruel tyranny of the soldiers, there was need of three great things. The sovereignty must be displayed in its most imposing grandeur, to claim the loyal reverence of its subjects. To defend it from all risk of sudden assaults, an apparent division of it was required. The succession must be made regular and well known beforehand.

I. The continual rude shocks and changes which the throne had suffered during many years had diminished its effect upon the imagination of mankind. Those who saw new men rising one after another and taking violent possession of the imperial office, no longer felt the same veneration for the supreme magistracy as they had felt when first the *Maiestas* of Rome had become incarnate in the successors of Octavian. The subtle policy of that great statesman had led him to frame the new system which he introduced in such a sort as to

[1] Probus admitted 16,000 recruits from the Germans with whom he was at war, in one day. Vop. Prob. 14: cf. Richter *l.c.*

[2] See Burckhardt, *Zeit Constantins des Grossen*, p. 24.

conceal the introduction. Living as humbly as any private senator, he only gradually acquired his powers by gathering into his own person all the republican offices. His one bold step was the assumption of the title *Augustus*, by which he endeavoured to impress upon the world the sanctity of his person even apart from the sanctity of his tribunician office.

But now that this mysterious awe for the Head of the State had been dispelled by the common spectacle of murdered Emperors, and the throne bought and sold, Diocletian found it necessary to effect an aesthetic change in the circumstances of his person. He was himself susceptible in a high degree of the impressions of artistic order and of grandeur, and he knew men well enough to see how strong is the love of pomp even in the proudest minds. He was aware that men's fear and hatred of ritual is the strongest tribute to its efficacy. And he made a bold use of this power. The Emperor is no longer, as in the time of Carus, a simple soldier seated bare-headed on the grass to receive a foreign ambassage[1]. Every theatrical effect is used to inculcate the grandeur of the throne:—the whole army look on with awe-struck eyes, while a Caesar, clad in the imperial purple of Rome, is forced to expiate his fault by marching a mile on foot before the car of the incensed Augustus[2]. The plain title of an Imperator conveyed no adequate notion of the majesty of a Diocletian:—it was but the highest dignity of a decayed Italian town. The Lord and Master of the world assumed a style which expressed him better,—*Sacratissimus Dominus Noster*. The word was all the better in the opinion of Diocletian for being

[1] Compare the account in Gibbon (Vol. II. p. 95, ed. 1792) of Carus and the Persian envoys.

[2] Amm. Marc. XIV. xi. 10.

abominable to Roman ears: for Diocletian had broken with all the narrow traditions of a Roman rule. *L'état c'est moi.* The mightiest general, the most venerable senator, might no longer draw near his divine *Numen* with the old familiar embrace of a fellow Roman. He had assumed, together with the diadem, all the other observances of the Persian court. Those who would approach him (if their rank and if their business warranted the favour) approached through many circles of guards and eunuchs, until at last with their foreheads touching the ground they bowed before the throne, where, in rich vestments from the far East, sat the wily Dalmatian scribe. "Ostentation," says the great historian of the Decline and Fall, "was the first principle of the new system instituted by Diocletian[1]."

II. But there was more solid work done than this. A single head can be severed at a single blow; and up to this time the head of the Roman state was perpetually exposed to such blows, with nothing to protect him. It had been proved again and again during the last twenty years, that neither virtues, nor military abilities, nor even popularity, afforded him any security. His defenceless position was a continual temptation to all the adventurers in the army; and the temptation was for ever proving successful. And the bulk of the empire made his position more difficult. The Emperor, fighting on the frontier against the common enemy, had no notion how many usurpers might be marching against

[1] II. p. 167. De Tillemont, never very discriminating in his judgment of characters, is of course quite wrong here in following Aurelius Victor: it was certainly no mere ritualism or 'pride in clothes,' though doubtless t c ceremonial was to Diocletian's taste.—The second Victor and Vopiscus are in direct variance on the question whether Aurelian wore the diadem: I think on the whole he did not. For some reason or other Diocletian never wears it on his coins: it first appears on the coinage of his successor Galerius.

him from Britain or Spain, from Syria or Pannonia; and by the time he heard of a sedition, it was old enough to have grown into a war. His presence was constantly demanded, both at the seat of half-a-dozen important campaigns, and also at the centre of civil government: and as the gift of ubiquity has been denied to the human race, he was forced to leave his most pressing affairs to deputies both at home and abroad, in none of whom probably he placed any confidence at all.

Diocletian found a way to remedy this defect. If the work of the vast realm was too laborious for a single person, and the isolated position too hazardous, Diocletian's plan was, not to divide the empire into several more manageable kingdoms, but to quadruple the personality of the sovereign[1]. The two Augusti, seated at Nicomedia and Mediolanum, conducted all the internal affairs of state with regularity and promptitude. The two Caesars on the eastern and western frontiers maintained or extended the Roman borders. All four were but as one person present in four places. It was to the interest of each not to advance himself at the expense of the rest. The fewness of the number precluded the formation of any cabals or conspiracies among them; while it was fully large enough to make the disaffected despair of a rebellion, for it was but rarely that any two of the four could be surprised in one place. We never hear again of the murder of an Emperor; for the murderer would have found the three survivors more than a match for him.

There was one splendid novelty in this arrangement

[1] Lact. mortes 7, in attributing this multiplication to Diocletian's *timidity*, has grasped the right thought, but by the wrong end.

which was worthy of Diocletian. The world was not indeed really divided into eastern and western empires, as under the Christian princes of the succeeding century. The laws were still promulgated under the names of both Augusti. There was not even that hard and fast partition of the provinces and legions which is said to have taken place on the accession of Constantius[1]. But to make any partition at all was an emphatic declaration that the days of Roman government were at an end. Marcus and Verus, Bassian and Geta, Carus and Carinus, had all ruled the provinces together from the so called Mistress of the world. But now Rome was fallen irretrievably. The great reformer swept away the relics of the lie which had so long imposed upon mankind. Milan and Nicomedia were now the two eyes of the world. Next after them ranked Treves and Sirmium. By the diminution of the Praetorian guards, who had passed from being the tyrants to being the protectors of the Quirites, Rome was reduced to the position of a second-rate garrison-town. Nay, even in the sumptuous buildings with which Diocletian ministered to Roman luxury, we can read the lesson of the Dalmatian supremacy. His vast Thermae "was the most extensive of all the gigantic edifices of the Empire." The baths of Caracallus could but accommodate one half the number that enjoyed the munificence of the new Augustus[2]. Rome was humbled by his gifts. But the most significant humiliation is yet to be told. To the utter horror of all conservative upholders of the lie, Rome and Italy themselves

[1] See Vales. on Eus. VIII. xiii. 11. Tillemont, however, denies the fact.

[2] Burn's *Rome and the Campagna*, p. 257. Even if Maximian is to be credited with the erection, the Thermae are a monument of the grand self-assertion of the reformed government.

were now forced, instead of receiving proudly the tributes of a hundred provinces, to pay taxes, like any other part of Diocletian's empire, for the maintenance of their foreign master's courts.

A writer who is usually judicious in his criticisms, and who had an admirable private source of information concerning Diocletian, tries to make us believe that the four Emperors always behaved with great reverence toward the Roman Senate[1]. But we may observe that Diocletian is a favourite with Vopiscus, and that Vopiscus was a conservative Roman; and all men would fain attribute to their heroes the motives which animate themselves. In point of fact, Diocletian, so far as our records go, behaved to the Senate precisely as though it did not exist. Maximian indeed, on one occasion to which we shall refer hereafter, appears to have consulted their opinion; but even to him the senatorial roll was chiefly attractive, as a list of persons who might be worth the plundering, and in whose families might be found a more *recherché* sort of victims to his pleasures[2]. We do not even know that Diocletian sent, like Carus, to acquaint the Senate of his accession. He did not put them down indeed, as a *non licita factio*;—he suffered them to sit, if they cared to do so, and to send him submissive deputations. Maximian even sat by and heard Mamertinus speak of Rome as the 'Lady of nations,' and say that she had 'sent the luminaries of her own Senate to lend for a few days to the most favoured city of Milan the semblance of her own Majesty.' But this bold rhetorician, in the same fine sentence, accurately described the situation, when he said how pleased that neg-

[1] Vop. Carin. 18: *semper reuerentes senatus Romani.*

[2] Lact. mort. 8: *ad uiolandas primorum filias.*

lected 'Lady' was to have two Emperors at no greater distance than Milan, and how the Romans sought the highest points of view around and strained their envious eyes towards the new metropolis[1]. As Gibbon points out, the most fatal blow to the authority of the Senate consisted in the mere absence of the Emperors.

III. But the most open abrogation of the Senate's powers was involved in Diocletian's scheme for regulating the succession. The only real safeguard for a nation's peace and welfare is the belief in the Divine Right of Kings, not viewed as a theological dogma, but as a profound political maxim, based on the facts of history. There need be no great power entrusted in reality to the reigning family; but so long as the primacy of the state is vested in a line of persons who succeed one another in some indisputable order, no revolution need be feared; in fact a revolution must be nearly impossible. There could hardly be a civil war to decide between candidates for the office of prime minister or grand vizier. But once leave this peaceful hereditary government, and the worst consequences ensue. No elective monarchy, no republic, except that of Rome, has lasted long without civil bloodshed; and even our exception was convulsed with dissensions, horrible to think of, during its earliest and latest years. And a despotism is in a far worse case. The peace and safety of all the Roman world depended on the life of one man; and that one man usually had no sort of birth-

[1] The passage deserves transcription:—*ipsa etiam gentium Domina Roma, immodico propinquitatis uestrae elata gaudio, usque e speculis suorum montium prospicere conata, quo se uoltibus uestris propius expleret, ad intuendum cominus quantum potuit accessit. lumina siquidem Senatus sui misit, beatissimae illi per eos dies Mediolanensium ciuitati similitudinem Maiestatis suae libenter impertiens, ut ibi tunc esse sedes imperii uideretur, quo uterque ueneral imperator!*

claim to his position, nothing to make his person specially sacrosanct, and certainly, as a general rule, nothing whatever to endear him to the people, unless indeed he ingratiated himself with the lewd rabble by the bloodiness of his shows, or with the army by the vastness of his largesses. Even this custom of largesse endangered the position of the prince; for, the more princes, the more frequent largesse; and in order to be able to lavish the same, the donors were obliged to extort excessive and unrighteous taxes from the people, which, by a natural Nemesis, rendered them unpopular while taking the only possible steps to popularity. The peoples groaned under this rapid succession of princes, upon whose personal character they entirely depended, and resigned themselves again and again to be pillaged in apathetic despair.

It seems probable that Diocletian had barely sat upon the throne of West as well as East a month, before he took the first step to establish his new system of succession, by investing one Maximianus with the inferior dignity of a Caesar. Diocletian was a good general but not a great one. He had been selected for the same reasons which made the officers prefer Valerian to Aemilian:—he was not a mere soldier like themselves. Diocletian was doubtless conscious of his own weakness in warlike operations. He felt that he needed some faithful soldier, capable of undertaking the chief command of the forces, and yet willing to act in obedience to himself. Such an arrangement would please the army better than the reign of a second Probus; and Diocletian would have more leisure to devote to his own profound statesmanship. He was perhaps led finally to choose his old friend and countryman Maximian, as likely to be a fit assistant, by some skill or prowess dis-

played in the battle of Margus. We do not know how great a general Maximian was; but there is reason to credit him with some respectable strategic gifts, simply because there was nothing else whatever to recommend him. Diocletian, who seems to have been a very candid friend, found himself free to acknowledge repeatedly that Maximian, like Aurelian, ought never by rights to have been a sovereign. His powers, he said, were those of a field-marshal:—he was disqualified for government by his harsh barbarity[1]. But in spite of these defects, after Maximian had satisfactorily served his noviciate for eleven months, the next step was taken. He was associated with Diocletian as full Augustus[2], bound to his benefactor by no other laws of subordination than those which gratitude and good faith would suggest. From that time on we never hear of a moment's dissension between the two Emperors until a much later period. While Diocletian could afford to disparage the character of his partner, Maximian had learned to look upon him with a quaintly superstitious fear, and laid his victories,—whether over the poor Bagaudae of Gaul or over the dreaded and inaccessible Moors,—at the feet of the elder sovereign.

It was not till six years from the day of Maximian's elevation,—that is, not till the first of April, A.D. 292, that Diocletian ventured upon completing his work, by adding to the double Augustus-ship a corresponding double Caesarship.

[1] Vop. Aur. 44: *Herennianus praefectus praetorii Diocletiani, teste Asclepiodoto, saepe dicebat, Diocletianum frequenter dixisse, cum Maximiani asperitatem reprehenderet, Aurelianum magis ducem esse debuisse quam principem. nam eius nimia ferocitas eidem displicebat.*

Hunziker, p. 137 note 5, thinks Galerius referred to: but Vopiscus calls Galerius by this name alone (Carin. 18), and certainly Herculius, though not more of a general than Galerius, was still less of a statesman.

[2] April 1, A.D. 286: see Tillemont, Emp. IV. p. 500 (ed. Bruxelles, 1709).

Doubtless long before he had himself assumed the purple, he had excogitated plans for making the government of the world a happier thing for the world itself, and less precarious for the governors. Like the great first Founder of the Empire, he had been contented to wait patiently until the convenient seasons should offer themselves for introducing new improvements and adding new buttresses to his throne. We must try to consider the system somewhat in detail.

The two Head-Emperors claimed the Divine Right in the most literal sense. They professed no allegiance to men, neither to Senate nor to soldiery. From Jupiter alone they had received their purple, and, when they resigned, into his hands alone they resigned it[1].

Of the two Augusti, one, clearly, was intended always to have the preeminence: there was to be no doubt who was the real master. Edicts were issued under both names: the rescripts bore both: but one name is invariably the first[2]. We find Maximian not only *obeying* willingly the order to persecute the Christians[3], but also most reluctantly submitting to Diocletian's decision in the matter of abdication[4]. Even Galerius, when at length he became an Augustus, in spite of his contempt for Constantius, found himself restrained from giving full vent to his fury against the faith by the milder determination of his senior.

In the same way the two Caesars were not on an equality. We continually have mention of holding the third, or the

[1] Paneg. Incerti, v. 12: *recipe Iuppiter quae commodasti.*

[2] Lac. mort. 20: *Constantium quamuis priorem nominari esset necesse, contemnebat.*

[3] Lact. mort. 15: *libens paruit.* Of course we must not press the word too hard.

[4] Eutr. IX. 27: *cui aegre collega optemperauit;* Aur. Vict. C. XXXIX. 48: *cum in sententiam Herculium aegerrime traduxisset.*

fourth place: though of course, in their case, subordination implied no allegiance, but only signified the order in which they might expect to accede to the primacy. The promotions took place in order of seniority, which not only had the beneficial effect of securing the succession from all contest, but also provided that the Eastern and Western portions of the realm should alternately have the precedence, and so avoided jealousy. Thus at the death of Constantius, Severus succeeds him (as *second*, however, not *primus*), not as being Constantius' own Caesar, but as being the senior: and Maximin forthwith becomes the heir-apparent, while Constantine takes the lowest room. The Augusti were to be taken from the Caesars alone[1].

It seems quite certain that Diocletian wished his own precedent to be followed, and that at the end of twenty years (if the Emperor lived to hold office so long) he should retire into private life, leaving younger men to do the work, and taking away from them the temptation to put an end otherwise to his reign. We can scarcely account else for the simultaneous abdication of Maximian and Diocletian: or for the determination of Galerius (who really was desirous of carrying out—so far as he understood them—the plans of a far wiser genius than his own) to give up his position as soon as he had celebrated his Vicennalia and set his house in order.

Wherever it seemed possible, the great statesman wisely wished the succession to run in families: and yet he sternly excluded all notion that there was a hereditary *right* to the purple. There seems very little reason to doubt that he would personally have preferred to make Constantine and Maxentius Caesars at the time of his abdication, but was over-

[1] The appointment of Licinius was the first departure from this order, and proved (of course) the wreck of the whole system.

powered by Galerius. However valuable the hereditary right may be in the case of a single throne, it would have quite marred the meaning of the quadruple system of Diocletian. If but one of the four had been an imbecile or a minor (as might well be if natural kinship had been the rule) the whole balance of the fabric would have been destroyed. At the same time, where ability was to be had among the sons of the Caesars, the blood relationship offered a great additional stability: for it was not often likely that a father and son should be at variance, like Herculius and his rebellious offspring. In fact, so great a value was set upon the personal tie, that in every case where nature did not supply the link, it was formed by marriage, divorce being insisted upon if the new Caesar was no longer free from the yoke of matrimony. It was not without significance that the two Augusti were invariably spoken of as *fratres*, and that Galerius sought to appease the discontentment of his younger colleagues by substituting the title of *filii Augustorum* for that of Caesars.

The practical working of the new system was admirable. The commanders of the several armies did their work in happy security, knowing that there was nothing to fear from within, —and with a most prosperous issue. The usurper Carausius, to whom at first Diocletian had been forced to concede the title of Augustus, fell before Constantius, and restored our rich island to the unity of the empire[1]. The whole of Africa yielded to Maximian; while Diocletian himself superintended,

[1] Those who doubt the propriety of this epithet at that stage of our national progress, must consult the rapturous eulogies of Eumenius, Paneg. IX. 9 and X. 11: *tot uectigalibus quaestuosa.* At the same time it must be admitted that when it suits his purpose to extol the *difficulties* of the conquest, he uses less flattering language: Pan. IV. 22: *Britanniam, squalidum caput siluis et fluctibus exerentem.*

with pitiless severity, the reduction of Egypt. Galerius, though at first utterly beaten by the Persians, at last subdued most effectively the vastest monarchy of the East, and added five fair provinces beyond the remote mysterious Tigris to the dominions of his father-in-law. The last real war of the empire was accomplished, and Rome beheld, in Diocletian's nineteenth year[1], the last triumph that ever trod the Sacred Way.

The harmony of the four rulers was almost proverbial. The apostate Julian, many years later, describes it in a very exquisite passage, in metaphors borrowed from the language of festal processions, as though it were some magnificent march of the whole world into a happier and holier state. "Diocletian," he says, "walked first in splendid array, leading with him the two Maximians and my own grandfather, Constantius. And hand was linked to hand, and yet they did not walk abreast, for the others formed as it were a choral dance around him, making him a guard of honour, and ready, if he had suffered them, to run before him, like lacqueys: but he would in no wise claim more honour than was his own. And when he felt that he was weary, he gave to them all the great burden that he bore upon his shoulders, and walked on, free and happy. The gods wondered at the concord of the men and gave them to sit over very many[2]."

Lactantius in the seventh chapter of his clever and amusing little book gives us a very fair description of the works to which Diocletian devoted himself in the interior of

[1] I may be excused entering into the proof that the Triumph and the Vicennalia were not celebrated at the same time: cf. Hunziker, p. 142, note.

[2] Jul. Caess. p. 315, Spanheim. The Scriptural tinge of the original bewrays the Apostate. To enjoy the beauty of the piece, it is better not to see the silly context which spoils it.

the empire. He mentions first the great increase of the standing army;—so great, he complains, that there were not enough men left to till the ground, which was allowed to run wild; and the army itself suffered in consequence, as the supply of provisions was inadequate to their demands. Perhaps the complaint is partly true, but no doubt receives its bitter tone from the dislike of the author to the Emperor whose cowardice (Lactantius thinks) occasioned the persecution. Next he finds fault with the admirable system of local governments now introduced: provinces were divided and subdivided into more manageable portions, like the *arrondissements* and *cantons* of modern France; this multiplication of offices, while of course it multiplied salaries, and therefore taxes to match, and while it made the state machinery more complicated, yet was an effectual means of putting down the extortion and wrong which Lactantius thinks it produced; for each petty officer was constantly overhauled by his superior, so that the central government had a far better control than in the old days of praetors and quaestors[1]. What was really irksome to the people, and to this writer among the rest, was the perpetual ostentation of government, in the person of these innumerable officials, which we have noticed as the first principle of Diocletian's system. This dislike actually broke out into riots, when

[1] Hunziker, p. 142: *Wir können seine Regierung am besten als einen durch die Verhältnisse nothwendig gewordenen und in umsichtiger Hand ruhenden* patriarchalisch-bureaukratischen *Despotismus bezeichnen.*

I have omitted all particularisation of these offices, as well as of the court dignities. The subject may be found worked out with German laboriousness in Wietersheim's *Völkerwanderung*, Vol. III. ch. 18. The general result fully establishes the position that *whatsoever* was novel, striking, and anti-Roman in Constantine's policy was learned in the school of Diocletian.

Diocletian—in whose days political economy lay in undiscovered mines of thought—attempted to regulate the prices in the market; but as soon as the disturbance was reported an order came down that the obnoxious regulation should be removed[1]. What Lactantius thinks the 'insatiable avarice' of Diocletian, will perhaps obtain a better name at this distance of 1600 years. In order that he might never find himself with an empty treasury at some sudden emergency, he determined to keep a reserve-fund always ready, and preferred levying new taxes to touching this deposit. Diocletian did not, like former Emperors, treat the state resources as if they were his own private property, so 'avarice' can hardly be laid to his charge. We have it on excellent authority that he was extremely parsimonious in all those matters which had hitherto constituted the chief bulk of imperial expenses: though the four imperial courts[2], and the salaries of many hundred *rationales* and *uicarii*, cost money, yet they can hardly have cost more than the games which were now retrenched. There was, however, one new object on which Diocletian seems indeed to have lavished a great deal of wealth. He had a passion for building. The description of his own palace at Salona reads like the Arabian Nights. His wife and his daughter appear to have had similar mansions built for them. Basilicas, circuses, public offices, rose in all the towns in his dominion. His outlay upon the new capital of the East was so prodigious that Lactantius tells us he wished to make Nicomedia the cocqual of Rome. It seems as if the writer of whom we speak was

[1] See Burckhardt *Const.* p. 70.

[2] We do not know however whether the Caesars were indulged with the same Oriental pomp as their Augusti: probably not.

constrained to admire the grandeur of Diocletian's management, and tried to record it for us with as bad a grace as possible.

Eusebius, though his account is less definite, speaks much more generously of the first eighteen years of this great reign. "What abundance,—what prodigal abundance—of good things this reign was permitted to enjoy, no man is sufficient to declare. Those who held the highest government of the state, completing their tenth years and their twentieth years, in feasts, and great solemnities, and most sumptuous banquets, and merrymaking, passed all their time in perfect and unshaken peace[1]." The secular panegyrists—and who can wonder at them?—thought all misery was at an end for evermore, and hailed Valerius Diocletianus Jovius as the "Father of the Golden Age[2]."

[1] Eus. VIII. 13.

[2] It must be confessed they thought less highly of Herculius. Lampr. Heliog. 35: *Diocletianus aurei parens saeculi, et Maximianus, ut uolgo dicitur, ferrei.* Observe carefully that the book from which these words are taken is addressed to the first Christian Emperor. —The compliment, however, was not uncommon in worse times: see (e.g.) Calpurn. Sic. I. 42:

aurea secura cum pace renascitur aetas,
et redit ad terras tandem squalore situque
alma Themis posito, iuuenemque beata secuntur
saecula, maternis causas qui lusit in ulnis.
dum populos deus ipse reget,

and so on. The literary *deus* was doubtless Numerian, but Carinus was still polluting the earth with his existence.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHURCH AND THE AGE.

οὐδ' ὅστις πάροιθεν ἦν μέγας
παμμάχῳ θράσει βρύων
οὐδ' ἀλέξεται, πρὶν ὤν,
ὃς δ' ἔπειτ' ἔφυ, τρια-
κτῆρος οἴχεται τυχών·

Ζῆνα δέ τις προφρόνως ἐπινίκια κλάζων
τεύξεται φρενῶν τὸ πᾶν,
τὸν φρονεῖν βροτοὺς ὁδώ-
σαντα, τῷ πάθει μάθος
θέντα κυρίως ἔχειν.

AESCHYLUS[1].

EQUALLY with all other peaceable citizens of the empire, the Church had been rejoicing in the peace and prosperity of these times. It was now between forty and fifty years since Valerian, her last persecutor[2], had fallen into a miserable captivity in Persia. By the action of his unworthy son, Christianity had become a *religio licita*—an authorised cult[3]. And our faith had made the most of her time: she was

[1] A reference to the context (*Agam.* 155—178) will amply justify the application of this passage to the progress of Christianity.

[2] For it seems certain that Aurelian was only an *intending* persecutor; see Neander I. 193 (I quote from Torrey's translation). The few martyrdoms under Claudius Gothicus cannot be magnified into a persecution, as Prof. Büdinger wishes (*Untersuch. zur röm. Kaisergesch.* III. 368), though doubtless respect for Constantine's ancestor would be a βοῦς ἐπὶ γλώσσῃ to the Church historians.

[3] Eusebius VII. xiii. The word *religio* of course does not answer to our derivative. Paganism and Christianity were not considered as two entirely different and mutually exclusive religions. The worship (e. g.) of Isis is a *religio:* the worship of the Sacred Heart is a *religio.* Gallienus allowed the cultus

beginning to prove herself the victory that overcometh the world.

We can discern good reasons for this progress not only in the internal character and doctrines of the Church, but also in the peculiar circumstances of heathen society at this time. The world was indeed in many ways prepared to be overcome, and not unwilling to submit. In that howling wilderness which the Roman civilisation had become, many mountains and hills had been brought low and valleys filled, in preparation for the victorious advances of the Cross. The whole of the social system was completely shaken. Men's goods, their characters, their families, their lives, were, until the time of Diocletian, in continual jeopardy: and even under his sway, in some parts of the realm, their security was rather comparative than solid. It was better to be the subject of a Maximian, who felt himself secure upon the throne, and who could dispense with the accursed espionage of the *frumentarii*[1], than to be constantly pillaged by the hosts of warring pretenders; but even Maximian's reign was an age of iron. They were freed from the fear of many horrible tyrants, only by being quite irrecoverably in the hands of one. And the perpetual sense of insecurity had, as usual, tended to destroy public morality. Such is our nature, that the apprehension of evil days both drives us to smother our anxieties in pleasure, and at the same time robs the pleasure of its sweets. The attempt of

of Christ (probably without much investigation of its principles) in precisely the same way as the cultus of Mithras or Serapis.

[1] Aur. Vict. Caess. XXXIX. 44: *remoto pestilenti frumentariorum genere, quorum nunc* (A.D. 358) *agentes rerum simillimi sunt. qui cum ad explorandum annuntiandumque, qui forte in prouinciis motus existerent, instituti uiderentur, compositis nefarie criminationibus, iniecto passim metu, praecipue remotissimo cuique cuncta foede diripiebant.* Cf. Dionys. Alex. ap. Eus. hist. eccl. VI. xl. 2.

Decius to restore the censorship, and Diocletian's strenuous but unavailing marriage laws, are by no means the only signs of the popular corruption. Despairing society had abandoned itself to luxurious wantonness, and wantonness was rewarded with the inevitable curse of *ennui*.

Ennui and insecurity had both exercised a profound influence upon the religion of the third century. Men found that there was neither peace nor excitement to be found in the old mythological creeds. The reasonings of Evemerism, the wit of satirical writers, and the sense of common decency, had combined to extinguish all actual belief in the legends themselves. The contemporary poets,—a Calpurnius and a Reposian—wrote poems upon these divine topics, with perhaps a trifle less faith in them than Mr Morris or Mr Swinburne may be thought to shew. An agreeable half-hour might be spent in such literary amusement, but the age craved passionately for something which might engross and satisfy the mind more thoroughly. And while it was impossible to believe in the legends of the old gods, their outward worship did not present sufficient attractions to make up for the lack of faith. The ritual of the altars of Jupiter and Minerva was stately and venerable, but cold and uninspiring: it might conduce to self-respect and self-control, but not to self-forgetfulness.

The jaded spirits of the voluptuaries, in casting about for something which might either whet their appetites afresh, or give them some rest from the imperious demands of self, found ready for use some of the most subtle machinery which the spiritual foes of men have ever devised to vex our souls. That worship of Baal and Ashtaroth which had bidden so successfully for the allegiance of the Israelitish kingdom, was

now the most popular religion from the Orontes to the Atlas. This devotion passed under many names, and had a hundred different forms, according as it came with Heliogabalus from Emesa, or with Aurelian from Sirmium. But whatever it were called, the rites of the Sun and Moon—of Serapis and Isis,—of Astarte, Atargatis, Urania,—of Mithras from Persia,—or of the jealous Mistress of Atys from the Phrygian hills,—all had the same underlying principle. They were designed for the deification of sensuality. A frightful asceticism was combined with unutterable lusts, and the mutilations of the body and the shedding of the blood promoted that consciousness of the flesh which they were thought to exterminate. Carnal indulgences were made a normal part of worship. When the body was sensible of lassitude, religion was at hand to stimulate it to fresh delights. By cultivating a warm and passionate ritual, full of exciting gestures, celebrated in imposing vestments[1], and accompanied with the most ravishing music known, men were so absorbed by their sensuous emotions, that they supposed themselves to be in the highest atmosphere of the spirit. This was the way in which the orgies of Baal-worship tried to relieve men from apprehension by concentrating all their powers upon the fleeting present[2].

But happily there were also other directions which the religion of the people took. Those who had too much sense of decency to join in the enthusiasms of nature-worship, and yet needed something to cheer them amid the blank despondency of the times, sought consolation in trying to discover the

[1] 2 Kings x. 22.

[2] The same thing had been attempted, only in a far less exquisite form, by the Bacchanalian enthusiasts after the battle of Cannae.

secrets of the future. We find a strange revival of belief in omens and prophecies, auguries and oracles. The writers of the 'Historia Augusta,' whose labours were performed (for the most part) under Diocletian and Constantine, repeat a multitude of stories of successful fortune-telling. In constant attendance at the court of Diocletian, both at Nicomedia and during his sojourn in the East, haruspices were to be seen[1]: it is possible that the royal professorships of that art founded by the virtuous Syrian eclectic, Alexander Severus, were still in existence[2]. Beside the newer and more accessible methods of magic, the old oracles of Delphi and Miletus, Praeneste and Clitumnus might perhaps be less sought: but they were still vocal, when Pausanias made his famous tour[3]. The desire for a revelation—for that 'sure and Divine word' which Plato hoped one day to see[4]—was too strong for these accredited channels of communication with Heaven to become obsolete. Indeed so great was their power that Porphyry, partly out of direct hostility to Christianity, endeavoured to compile a book of Scriptures for pagans out of authentic responses of the oracles[5]. Men could still alleviate the horrors of an uncertain future by learning the worst at once.

Magic and prophecies, however, are not a solid aliment for human hopes. Something more than fortune-telling was wanted. Men flocked abundantly again to the mysteries, both old and new, for there they found not only the gratification of the desire for secrets and for religious awe, but also

[1] Lact. mort. 10 and 11.

[2] Lampr. Al. 44; *haruspicibus...salaria instituit et auditoria decreuit, et discipulos cum annonis pauperum filios modo ingenuos dari iussit.*

[3] Paus. X. 12. I owe this quotation, and much else in these paragraphs, to Burckhardt's elaborate view of the contemporary religion, *Zeit Constantins*, sect. 5 and 6.

[4] Plat. Phaed. 85 D.

[5] See Neander, vol. I. p. 234.

the hope of immortality. According to the old popular language, the future life (if such there were) was a life of squeaking miserable ghosts. But the extreme misery of this earthly life had now forced men, without much reasoning, to believe that the hereafter must be better. Though no recondite philosophical doctrines were taught to the initiated, yet those who had gazed upon the awful images and relics displayed amid the glaring torches in the sanctuary of Eleusis[1], or had been buried awhile in gorgeous raiment on the Vatican hill, while the blood of slaughtered bulls soaked through the sprinkled earth to the grave in which they lay[2], certainly believed that they had been put in a new, direct relation to the powers of the unseen world, and that they had passed from death to life.

Christianity,—and the special aspect of it which that age presented,—was eminently calculated to meet the wants expressed in these different forms of religion. It gave an intense interest to the present moment. It aimed at making consciousness as vivid as possible[3]. It invested with a splendid dignity each most trivial action of daily life. If men needed excitement, the soberest faith acted as a perpetual stimulant;—and yet a stimulant so healthy as to produce no

[1] See the masterly note on Plat. Phaedr. 250 B, by the Master of Trinity. Though there was no special *teaching*, still, as it were, *opere operato*, some permanent advantage was gained by the μύσται, which became more and more connected with the future state, in proportion as the present world was considered desperate.

[2] Compare the account of the Taurobolia in Prud. peri st. x. 1011 foll., and Dressel's note. There can be no doubt that this ceremony was not only symbolical of future life, but even of some sort of resurrection. See note on p. 36.

[3] This thought was brought out in a sermon of Prof. Lightfoot's, on St John x. 10 (latter part), unhappily not yet published.

lassitude[1]. Was asceticism an attraction? the Christian was bound by a perpetual vow to make war upon the flesh, not by sudden orgiastic onslaughts, but with a rational systematic constancy. If men found splendid ceremonies a help to self-forgetfulness, the Catholic Church, in her long peace, if not before, had learned to use a ritual, severely chaste indeed, but, to those who understood it, affecting and sublime. Though from the contempt with which Arnobius speaks of the heathen use of incense, and Lactantius of their ceremonial use of lights, we might infer that these exquisite symbols had not yet been incorporated in the Christian worship[2], yet the antiphonal hymns, the long vestments of the priesthood[3], the careful arrangements of the building, the solemn attitudes of devotion, the orderly movements of the inferior clergy who formed the choir, made such functions as that of the consecration of Tyre Cathedral as imposing as any which the modern Church can shew. And one entirely novel element was to be found in the assemblies of the Christians. All the powers of trained orators like St Cyprian and St Athanasius were tasked in producing sermons, full of the most stirring appeals, and the most soothing consolations.

Thus instead of encouraging men to pry into the secrets of their earthly future, Christianity engaged them upon the immediate present;—or else it carried them on to a future

[1] St John iv. 14; cf. S. Ambr. hymn. vii. 23:

laeti bibamus sobriam
ebrietatem Spiritus.

[2] Lact. inst. VI. 2; Arn. VII. 26; cf. Tert. ap. 42: I think Canon Robertson (*Hist.* vol. II. p. 44, ed. min.) concludes too strongly from the first two passages quoted. The language is quite compatible with a *Christian* usage of the same things. Tert. idol. 11, after enumerating the common uses of incense adds: *nobis quoque insuper ad solacia sepulturae usui sunt.*

[3] The ποδήρης (Eus. X. iv. 2): this passage may be figurative, but the fact remains: see Heinichen on Eus. Vit. Const. I. xlii. 1; and Bingham xiii. 8.

over which their own wills and actions had control, unaffected by the chances of this mortal life. It had its own mysteries. There were secret doctrines undivulged to pagan ears, sacred formulas only taught on the very eve of Baptism. There were 'divine oracles' which pagan eyes might never sully, but in which the simplest Christian might find his doubts resolved and his goings ordered. And above all there were ordinances, —*the* Mysteries—into which we believe that Angels in vain desire to look, and yet if one thing is more certain to the Church than another, it is that the devout partaker is really 'born again for eternity,'—is really joined to the Godhead in an insoluble bond[1].

By such means as these, besides those more general causes enumerated in the "Decline and Fall," the Kingdom of Heaven had been gradually widening. It had attained a numerical census which is very variously calculated. Naturally the proportion of Christendom and Heathendom differed greatly in different regions. Chastel gives to our faith a fifteenth part of the western world, and a tithe of the East. Gibbon estimates the total Church as a twentieth of the population, La Bastie followed by Burckhardt as a twelfth, Matter as a fifth part, while Stäudlin makes bold to divide the world in equal shares between the two religions. Dean Milman does not care to discuss the statistics. "If it be impossible," he says, "to form the most remote approxima-

[1] Compare the Taurobolian inscription quoted by Burckhardt, p. 222:

IN • AETERNVM • RENATVS ;

and another mystic epitaph, p. 218:—"There are two distinct bands among the dead:... I belong to the latter, because I had taken a God for my conductor."

'Oracles' and 'mysteries' were at that time the most ordinary names for the Scriptures and the Sacraments,—the latter of course being still the common term in the Greek Church.

tion to their relative numbers with that of the Pagan population, it is equally erroneous to estimate their strength and influence by numerical calculation. All political changes are wrought by a compact, organized, and disciplined minority. The mass of mankind are shown by experience, and appear fated by the constitution of our nature, to follow any vigorous impulse from a determined and incessantly aggressive few[1]."

But even if the Church could not claim equality with Paganism in this matter of numbers, there were other points besides that of positive faith and energetic zeal, in which she could hold her own. Intellectual and literary power was fast passing over from the heathen side. Longinus was dead; so was Plotinus. Porphyry and Hierocles were left alone to waste their gifts in combating Christianity, either by the venomous attacks of jealousy, or by "weaving their souls away, out of sight of other souls[2]." Even as thinkers these men were no whit higher than philosophers like Lactantius and Arnobius and Pamphilus. Against the voluminous and varied learning of Eusebius, we have nothing to set but the bombast of the Panegyrics and the pleasant gossiping biographies of the Caesars. And as for poetry, we could have seen in the graceful exercises collected by Wernsdorf, even if Nemesian himself had not told us[3], that the stock of subjects upon which

[1] Milman, *Hist. Chris.* II. 205 (ed. min.), cf. Gibbon, II. 365; Burckhardt, 157. Those who acquiesce in Gibbon's estimate forget that his data are those of the city of *Rome*, and at the time of *Decius*. Rome was the most pagan city in the empire, and sixty years had added their contingents to the Church, including the abundant harvest that would be reaped after such a sowing of the Church's seed.—But I see by Canon Robertson (I. 221), that Dr Lightfoot has touched upon the subject. I have no doubt the question has been set at rest.

[2] Mrs Browning's *Greek Christian Poets*, p. 2.

[3] Nemes. cyneg. 47; *omnis et antiqui uolgata est fabula saecli.*

pagans could write was quite exhausted. The most genuine effort of contemporary Latin poetry is the doggerel which the boys at Rome made up about Aurelian :—

unus homo mille mille mille decollauimus:
mille mille mille uiuat ille mille qui accidit.
tantum uini habet nemo, quantum fudit sanguinis[1].

The Muses had been christened, and were to burst forth in the passionate splendours of Gregory and Synesius, Prudentius and Ambrose.

Nor were the adventitious goods of fortune lacking to the Church. The wealth which was now in her hands might well have excited the covetousness of a less honourable sovereign than Diocletian[2]. Bishops like Paul of Antioch lived in greater state than the Emperor Aurelian himself. According to Eusebius, even governors of provinces and great state officers were fain to court the goodwill and support of the Prelates. When Gallienus had issued his edict of toleration, he not only sent his missive to the State officers, but wrote formal letters to the magnates of the Church. The old buildings in which the Christians of earlier and humbler days had met, were now too strait and too plain to suit the multitudes of rich and poor who flocked to worship there. Splendid churches were erected everywhere. It is plain in Lactantius that the old Emperor's love for architecture, as well as his farsighted policy, made him shrink from destroying the mighty Cathedral of Nicomedia, which towered up on an eminence in full sight of his own palace windows.

Christian laymen were in high position everywhere. If

[1] Vop. Aur. 6.

[2] The covetousness of Roman governors had been excited, and cheated, forty years before by St Lawrence, Prud. peri steph. II. 45 foll.

we may credit Eusebius, some of the brotherhood had even been intrusted with the management of provinces, with the express assurance that they need not be distressed about the sacrifices usually necessary in such cases: they might be omitted. And in the court itself, all the highest positions about the Emperor Diocletian's person appear to have been purposely assigned to Christian chamberlains. The three who are expressly mentioned, Dorotheus, Gorgonius, and Peter, proved the truth of their faith by their death: it is probable, therefore, that they proved it also by their lives; and that, as Joseph was raised in the heathen house of Potiphar till, whatever was done there, he was the doer of it, so the wise Diocletian (who had ample reason to know that princes are sometimes murdered by those whom they trust) was induced to select for these trusty posts men whose holy lives raised them conspicuously above suspicion[1]. These great officers, so much more influential in an Oriental palace than among us, lived with the master who was so inaccessible to others, on terms of the most easy familiarity. They not only respected so good a prince, but loved him and were loved by him like children with their father. Only the library, for some reason or other, was not yet under a Christian servant,—at least at the time when Bishop Theonas wrote his most interesting letter to Lucianus[2]. Is it not possible that this advantage,

[1] S. Theonae ep. apud Routh, Rel. Sac. III. 439 foll.: *quanto magis princeps ipse nondum Christianae religioni adscriptus ipsis Christianis uelut fidelioribus uitam et corpus suum curandum credidit, tanto decet uos sollicitiores esse et prospectiores, ut per id plurimum Christi nomen glorificetur et illius fides per uos qui principem fouetis quotidie augeatur.*

[2] Neander I. 194, Bernhardt, *Diocl.* pp. 34, 35. The letter cannot reasonably be assigned to any other period, because Peter, the successor of Theonas (Eus. VII. xxxii. 31) suffered martyrdom under Maximin (Eus. IX. vi. 3). From this passage we may gather that Theonas died in 300. There is no reason to doubt the identity of the Theonas.

too, was afterwards gained, and that the conversations for which Theonas gives instructions so sensible, did take place, and further develope Diocletian's good disposition towards us? But the faith had won a place nearer to the Emperor than any court officers could give it. There is no doubt whatever that his own wife Prisca and his daughter, the unhappy Valeria, were at any rate in their catechumenal probation, if indeed they were not already members of the Body[1]. Nay, this letter of Theonas speaks of Diocletian himself as of one only *not yet* entered on the Church's baptismal register.

Eusebius, however, with an ingenuous candour which ought to have forestalled the unkind criticisms of Gibbon[2], gives us a most sad account of the way in which this long armistice had affected the Church internally. Sloth and negligence had crept over her spiritual life. The great Sees wrangled with each other for precedency, and bitter words and excommunications were bandied about between them. Those who seemed to be the shepherds of the flock converted their holy office into a mere secular tyranny. They—or *we*, as the historian touchingly says—were ready to use violence against one another. The persecution which ensued he treats, not as

[1] Lact. mort. 15. Otherwise they can hardly be said *pollui*, by being forced to sacrifice.

[2] Eus. VIII. ii. Gibbon entirely, perhaps intentionally, misunderstands the reticence of the Bishop of Caesarea. Eusebius mentions the whole persecution as a deep humiliation to the Church; he expressly says that he means to pass over all that is discreditable to the Christians: would he have hinted at these scandals so plainly, had he entertained the dishonest intention which Gibbon imputes to him? He writes for *Christians*, and he desires to spare their feelings as much as he can. If he had mentioned the names of recreants, he would have wronged many families among his contemporaries. This venomous attack of Gibbon is in Vol. II. p. 490. At the same time we may regret that Eusebius took so narrow a view of what was "profitable first to us of the present day, and then to posterity."

proceeding from the will of the Emperors, but as a direct chastisement from Heaven for the sins of the Church. And who shall say that he was wrong? The historian can only notice those causes which may be proved by evidence; but the believer sees through all history the overruling Will of Divine Love.

The storm of judgment did not burst without admonition, though the admonition was unheeded. "Long before the general persecution," Eusebius writes, "when all was yet in peace," many brave spirits bore witness to the faith: *here and there one* suffered the loss, not of rank only, but of life. But all of these without exception were soldiers[1]: Satan did not yet see his way to a general onslaught on the Church. The whole of this little preliminary persecution, which must have been in a very limited section of the army, Eusebius traces up to some one insignificant commander, whom, in the History, he does not deign to name (though in the Chronicle he calls him Veturius), who apparently, being a martinet, on his own responsibility required all believers to resign their commissions. At first this was all that was proposed. There was no threat of death. It was a free choice between denial of the faith and military degradation. We shall see on what kind of grounds the few who were executed must have received that punishment.

Some considerable time[2] before that winter in which the general persecution was determined upon,—probably three years before Veturius cashiered his Christian subalterns,—

[1] Eus. VIII. iv. 2: *τῶν κατὰ τὰ στρατόπεδα μόνων ἀποπειρωμένου.* The expression a little lower down, *σπανίως εἴς που καὶ δεύτερος,* is very marked. This was in Diocletian's 17th year.

[2] Lact. mort. 10: *deinde interiecto aliquanto tempore in Bithyniam uenit hiematum.*

there was, according to Lactantius, a short outbreak in the East, where Diocletian was at the time[1]. The Emperor, who, for some cause or another, was in a state of nervous and irritable suspense, consulted the omens, to see if they could give him any relief. It was only at critical moments that (so far as we *know*) he had recourse to such observances; and this drawing of auguries helps to prepare us for the strange sight of Diocletian persecuting. The exta of the sacrifice presented none of the wished-for appearances. Another victim, and another, was sacrificed, and with the like result. The master of the soothsayers thereupon,—a well-known person of the name of Tages[2],—who had either observed some of the bystanders sign their foreheads with the deathless sign of the Cross, or suspected that it was so, assured Diocletian that the mystic answer was not given because there were present at the altar profane persons, who had not obeyed the summons always given to depart[3]. The old sovereign, in an uncontrollable fit of vexation and fretfulness, at once gave orders that all the people who were present should be made to sacrifice, and also all the

[1] The presence of Diocletian in the East—probably at Antioch—with an army, and the inquietude which suggested the consultation of the omens, as well as caused the Emperor to be so irritable, seem to point clearly to the year 297, when Diocletian, with his reserve force, was waiting there in suspense for news of Galerius.—The same story is told less fully in the Inst. div. IV. 27.

[2] Well-known, that is, to Lactantius' friends in Bithynia: *magister ille haruspicum*. The word *magister* seems to suggest the chair mentioned above, p. 33.

[3] The story gives Burckhardt (p. 327) occasion for an atrocious tirade against the poor professor of rhetoric who wrote the little treatise: *die Schrift beginnt gleich mit einer erweislichen Unwahrheit.* And all because Burckhardt chooses to suppose that according to Lactantius the presence of Christians in the court was unknown and disallowed! By and by he exclaims: *wenn nicht manches wichtige Detail sich nur hier aufbehalten fände, so wäre dieses Buch besser unentdeckt geblieben.* He thinks it an undeserved outrage upon the name of Lactantius to attribute the work to him.

servants in his palace. This conduct of the Christians, to whom he had been so kind, seemed intended just to spite and vex him. He determined that all who refused to do as he bade them should be soundly whipped. His anxiety about the crisis which was approaching (whatever it was) rose to such a pitch, that he even sent out messages to the commanders of the troops about him to propose the same test to the soldiers under them, and if any should refuse it, to turn them once for all out of the army[1]. Nothing further was done: the excitement soon passed off: no blood was shed, and the Emperor did not wish any to be shed: Lactantius does not even say in so many words that a single slave's back was the sorer, or that anybody at all was in any wise the worse, for this ebullition.

Besides the brief notice, given without details, in Eusebius, and this lively and probable incident in Lactantius, we have a few other documents which record martyrdoms before the persecution began. Of these we may set aside the Acts of St Maurice and the Theban Legion as being altogether improbable[2]. The pretty stories of the five stonemasons of Sirmium, and of the four 'Crowned Saints' of Rome, belong to a different period altogether, and are wrongly set at this date. But the Acts of St Maximilian, and of St Marcellus and St Cassian, are undoubtedly authentic, and throw great light upon the

[1] *datis ad praepositos litteris, etiam milites cogi ad nefanda sacrificia praecepit, ut qui non paruissent, militia soluerentur.* Hunziker, pp. 151, 152, confuses this with the action of Veturius which took place three years later, and interprets the *litterae* into a wholesale purgation of the army. If it were so, how came there to be so many Christian officers left for Veturius to deal with? Canon Robertson also (I. 204) follows the wrong lead in making the order universal.

[2] The story is given in Robertson, I. 203. There are several other documents, which Mr Hunziker has discussed in his second Excursus.

condition of the Christians under the tetrarchy, and therefore upon the origin of the persecution.

On the Ides of March in the year 295, while Dion, the proconsul of Numidia, was engaged in levying new troops to carry on the war against the Mauritanians, a young conscript of one and twenty, named Maximilian, was brought up to be measured, to see if he was of the regulation height. As he was being brought up, he cried aloud, "I may not serve, because I am a Christian :"—not (I believe) meaning that the military discipline could not admit of Christian soldiers, but that Christianity forbad the profession of arms. The proconsul refused to notice the appeal, and ordered him to be measured. Maximilian cried out again : "I cannot possibly serve : I *cannot* do what is wrong : I am a Christian." "Take the emblem of the service," said the magistrate, "and enlist." "I shall do nothing of the sort," the boy replied : "I already wear the emblem of Christ my God." The proconsul, unused to such smart frowardness, bad him take care, or he would despatch him to his Christ. The boy retorted that no higher distinction could be offered him. The proconsul said no more, but ordered them to hang the leaden badge about his neck. Maximilian answered boldly : "I refuse to take the badge of a worldly warfare. It is of no use. I shall tear it off. I cannot possibly wear this bit of lead, after accepting the saving emblem of my Lord Jesus Christ, who has suffered for our salvation, though you know Him not." In vain the magistrate, who admired the free spirit and pitied the youthful beauty of the boy, stooped to argue the case. It was perfectly possible, he pleaded, to be a good soldier and a good Christian at once. There were no idolatrous duties imposed upon the soldiers. A quarter of the army were Christian men. The

pick of the lifeguards who attended on all the four Emperors were Christians[1]. Maximilian was proof against all arguments. Those Christian soldiers, he supposed, knew their own business: it was none of his. It was impossible to ignore his refusal to serve: and the only punishment for such an offence was death. If he were let off, others who only wished to shirk duty would plead Christianity as their excuse. The lad had set his heart on martyrdom, and thanked God for giving him his heart's desire. He exhorted the brethren, who thronged around, to strive earnestly after the Beatific Vision and after a crown like his own. His dying request to his father was, that he would present the executioner with the new cloak which had been prepared for him against his entrance into the army. And so he passed out and was beheaded. A proof that this pagan proconsul had no objection to Christianity as such, and *could* have no objection to it as now a received religion, is exhibited in the fact that nothing was done to Maximilian's father, who stood by and openly backed the boy in his resolution[2].

This happened at Teveste, in Numidia, near the sources of the Bagradas. In the same quarter of the globe, at Tangiers, a like fate befell Marcellus, at a date unknown, but most likely after peace had been restored in Northern Africa. On the birthday of 'the Emperor'—Maximian, I suppose—the 21st of July[3], while all the soldiers of the legion were

[1] § 2: *in sacro comitatu dominorum nostrorum Diocletiani et Maximiani, Constantii et Maximi, milites Christiani sunt, et militant.* The names are in their right order. In the Acts next mentioned, Galerius is omitted, as having no *jurisdiction* in these parts.

[2] Ruinart, p. 263. I use the fine Verona edition of 1731.

[3] This is the date gathered by Tillemont from the birthday Panegyric. The Acts *might* have said *imperatorum*, since the two Augusti were born on the same day of the year, Pan. Gen. 1, 2.

celebrating the feast with meats offered to idols, Marcellus, who was a centurion, rose up and cast down his official vine-stick, his weapons, and his belt upon the table, and renounced the service. A soldier of Christ, he said, ought not to be entangled with the things of this world. He expressly renounced all allegiance to the Emperors—"*your* Emperors"—and reviled the state gods as deaf and dumb idols. He was treated with marked indulgence: the subordinate judge before whom he was brought regretted that the circumstance was too public for him to conceal it, but expressed his willingness to refer the matter to the Emperors or the Caesar, Constantius, in whose prefecture of Gaul the province of Tingitana was probably included. Finally he was remanded to the Deputy Prefect of the Praetorium[1], the *Vicarius* of the country, who gave the only possible sentence,—death. St Cassian, who was actuary to the Vicarius in military cases, on hearing this sentence, flung away his pen and book, and strenuously asserted that the decision was unjust. What more natural than that he should be associated in the punishment[2]?

We have reason to be very thankful for the preservation of these three records, because we may well suppose that all other martyrdoms before the year 303, such as the few in the legion commanded by Veturius, were the result of similar insubordination. Let us again remark that we know of no martyrdoms before that date but under military law[3]. Under military law, so far stricter than the civil, if a soldier persistently refused to obey an order to sacrifice, there was

[1] On the nature of this office, see Wietersheim, III. 87 foll. Strangely enough it was not chiefly a military office. This particular Vicarius seems to have been deputy for *two* Prefects.

[2] Ruinart, pp. 264—267.

[3] For the Sirmian stone-masons suffered at a later date than is usually supposed: see below, ch. vii.

nothing to be done but to execute him. The quarries were only a civil punishment. Besides, no Roman officer thought death—especially by the honourable method of beheading—a very severe penalty to inflict. Not one of these martyrs, then, perished simply for being a Christian, but for mutiny and treason. Of course an officer who was a zealous pagan might issue orders which Christians could not obey, in order to seek occasion against them: but yet the principle on which he would execute them was the same. And in all the cases we know of at all distinctly, the soldiers not only disobey, but disobey with ostentatious contumely.

Mr Hunziker, in his exhaustive essay, concludes from all this that Diocletian, and he alone, is responsible for all the deaths before 303, as well as for the inauguration of the terrible persecution then begun. His reasons for so thinking are very difficult to follow, and I profess I am unable to understand them. If, all through these years before the great strife began, Diocletian was itching to attack the faith, how came he possibly to be living on terms of endearing familiarity with his Christian chamberlains? how could he endure the embraces of his wife and daughter? My own conclusion would be just the reverse. I think the one reason why we find military, but no civil martyrdoms, is that Diocletian had less immediate control over the army. The legions were absolutely subject to the good pleasure of their tribunes, who (in details) acted independently of the higher authorities: while now, under the new careful civil organisation of Diocletian, no civil magistrate would have dared so to infringe the unrepealed law of Gallienus, as to punish a man for professing the religion it sanctioned: he would have heard more of it anon. Lactantius hints that even the omnipotence of

the monarch of the Roman realms had transgressed its rights, when Diocletian had his household flogged, and ejected the Christians from the army[1]. Here I cannot go with him: but it was indeed an admirable piece of self-continence (if Diocletian was so eager to destroy Christianity) that he did not have his slaves crucified and his soldiers beheaded. I cannot but regard his action on the occasion mentioned by Lactantius as being a mere paroxysm of that peculiar nervous nature (which broke down so utterly for a time at the Vicennalia), brought on by the agitating silence, which might perhaps mean that Galerius had suffered a second and a more disastrous defeat from the Persians[2]. I cannot but think that everything points to the fact that the old man was most favourably disposed towards the Church, and even when he was so far stirred as to terrify her by a taste of what he *might* do if he pleased, dealt far more leniently than might be expected.

Not that the Emperor had any notion (probably) that Christianity was true. Truth did not enter into the religion of pagans, for paganism had no historical basis to go upon. The most advanced of the Platonists were indeed just beginning to borrow from the Church the idea of the vital union between truth and devotion. They were endeavouring to make a philosophy of the popular religion: but Diocletian, though a man of culture, was not a Platonist. He most likely knew no more of this connexion than Pontius Pilate

[1] Lact. mort. 10: *nec amplius quicquam contra legem fecit.*

[2] It is perhaps worthy of notice that all the martyrdoms before 303 of which we have any *certain* knowledge, took place in Maximian's half of the empire. The Passion of St Maurice refers to Maximian by name. We do not know where the legion of Veturius lay, but as it was probably in the East, it would be under the superintendence of the fanatical Galerius at the time which Eusebius seems to indicate.

knew. And he had probably been taught very little of the inner significance of the Christian faith.

But the moral power of Christianity could not but be seen, and to such an advantage the great monarch was neither blind nor indifferent. His own private character was such, that not even the most slanderous of Church writers has aspersed it. Even if he winked at the murders of Carus and Numerian, the crime was insignificant in comparison with those of Constantine the Great,—and many another lauded Christian sovereign. He chose as the model of his life, not a sentimental Platonist, but a stern Stoic: he was often heard to say that he longed to attain that severity towards himself, that clemency towards others, which had distinguished the philosophic Antonine[1]. And this determined morality is shewn in all his public actions. On one occasion we find him shocked with the dissolute character of the public games. "The cultivation of the virtues," says Victor, "was promoted both by the advancement of more respectable men, and negatively by the punishment of every scandalous officer." In the very inauguration of his reign this character had taken the world aback: Aristobulus, the Prefect of the Praetorium, and Ceionius the Prefect of the City, were rewarded for their fidelity to Carinus, by being confirmed in their office under his foe and successor[2]. The marriage-edict of 295 might (with a few words altered) have had Bishop Theonas for its draughtsman. "The immortal gods," it runs, "will be (as heretofore) propitious and gracious to the Roman name, if we take heed

[1] Jul. Cap. Ant. Phil. 19: *saepe dicitis uos uita et clementia tales esse cupere qualis fuit Marcus.* The writer adds ingenuously: *etiamsi philosophia nec Plato esse possit, si reuertatur in uitam.*

[2] Tillemont, *Emp.* IX. 10.

that all our subjects lead a pious, peaceable, and virtuous life. The majesty of Rome has attained to such sublimity (under favour of all the gods) only by this means, that all her statutes have been clenched by their tone of rational piety and their careful observance of purity[1]." Even the ill-judged edict on the regulation of prices is dictated by the interests of public morals. "Avarice," the preamble says, "is becoming rampant. It is regarded almost as a religious cult among the unscrupulous robbers of the day[2]. Since mere human kindness is not strong enough to check the tide, it behoves us, who are the parents of the human race, to make a legal standard of exchange. And whereas it is extremely rare to find spontaneous beneficence in the present condition of men, and whereas fear is always seen to be the most righteous instructor of moral duties, it is our pleasure that any person, daring to extort money contrary to the forms of this statute, be liable to the punishment of death." The Emperor who had this over-mastering desire to restore public morality, could not but be attracted to the religion which made his confidential servants so diligent and upright.

And there was another reason for his favouring Christianity, perhaps stronger yet. Gibbon has pointed out with great sagacity what a magnificent strength there lay in the organisation of the Church. The Hierarchy expected and received, from all Christian men, a perfect and devoted obedience. The laity were subject to their Priests, the Priests to their Bishops, these to the Exarchs, and these again to the Patriarchs. There was as yet no higher gradation. But that keen-eyed statesman must have observed that here was the

[1] See the Appendix.

[2] The words are: *uelut quaedam religio apud improbos latrones aestimatur.* Cf. Colossians iii. 5.

very thing he most needed. If he could only oblige the Church, he might assume a more than papal supremacy over that weighty section of his subjects who saw in their Prelates the vicegerents of the Almighty. The worldliest politicians cannot afford to ignore the power of religion. Diocletian's administration and control over his subjects would be more than doubly secure if in each *dioccesis*, besides his Vicarius, he had the zealous services of an Exarch, in each *prouincia* both a Proconsul and an Archbishop, in each *parochia* both a Curator and a Bishop. Unless from Christianity, government could get but little aid from religion. Paganism was without any organisation at all. Pagans could not say with Tertullian: *Corpus sumus de conscientia religionis, et disciplinae unitate, et spei foedere*[1]. Paganism had no rites of admission, and no excommunication. It knew nothing of continuity in the successions of its ministers, and little of the jurisdiction of a hierarchy. The only distinction which it recognised between one flamen and another was such—perhaps it may yet be invented in modern Rome—as there would be between a priest of the Blessed Virgin and a priest of the *numen* of the Pope. And, as we have seen, Paganism in its popular phase was assiduously not inculcating the morality of Diocletian. But the machinery of the Church was as perfect as the informing Spirit of God could make it: and its one sworn foe was sin. The Emperor, as he sat on his palace-roof and watched half Nicomedia thronging up the opposite hill to hear good Bishop Anthimus preach, must have often thought how to turn this mysterious power to the best interests of his empire.

We shall see more clearly in the following chapter, how

[1] Tert. apol. 39.

very deeply the Church had commended itself to the great Augustus. The inquiry is one of no small interest. We have shown already how Christianity had been growing in stature and in favour with men, by reason of its minute adaptation to their spiritual cravings in that unsettled time. We have remarked how the power of its Truth had been gathering in the weightiest thinkers of the age. It ought to make some difference in the attitude of men towards the faith through all after-time, when it is seen that the most subtle statesman that had sat on the Roman throne since Octavian, and the most earnest since Marcus, constituted himself the protector of the Church.

CHAPTER III.

MOTIVES OF THE PERSECUTION.

But when whole *Rome* became Christian, when they all embraced the Gospel, and made Laws in defence thereof, if it be held that the Church and Commonweal of *Rome* did then remain as before; there is no way how this could be possible. HOOKER.

THE two old Emperors celebrated their triumph in the summer of the year 302. Peace was established everywhere, and not only peace, but a much rarer thing in the Roman Empire, good order. There seemed good reason indeed for rejoicing and thanksgiving. Diocletian returned to his Asiatic capital, full of hopeful anticipation of accomplishing a happy retreat in the following year. But the events of that winter marred the whole prospect, and overthrew the work of Diocletian's life, until at last it was restored by the masterly policy of Constantine the Great.

Gaius Galerius Valerius Maximianus was a native of that district on the south bank of the Danube, called New Dacia, or sometimes Aurelian's Dacia, where his mother had taken refuge from the inroads of the fierce Carpi who harassed her old home in Wallachia. His youth was spent in pasturing cattle

on his native plains; and by the malice of fortune the reminiscence stuck to him in his surname, Armentarius. When he came afterwards into notoriety, with a burlesque exaggeration of that principle on which Diocletian and his colleague had assumed the awful names of Jovius and Herculius, he suffered it to be reported that his mother had had intercourse with the great God of War, the father of Romulus, and that his own birth was the result[1]. It was one of the many sad misfortunes of Valeria, Diocletian's daughter, to be condemned to the honours of his bed, and to be tossed, like the Sibyl's sweet sop to Cerberus, as a check to his turbulent ambition. This man was, like most barbarians, brave and warlike, and owed his position entirely to these military gifts. There can be no doubt that Galerius was a very able general indeed, fully worthy of the office of Aurelian and Carus to which he succeeded. He possessed also those other fine qualities, without which ('tis said) no man can be a good commander —fidelity and obedience. No other moral virtues can easily be ascribed to him. Some of his recorded sayings and actions seem to show a sort of coarse but cunning humorousness: which supports what Victor says of him in the fortieth chapter of the *Caesars*. He was so handsomely endowed (we are there told) with natural gifts, that his powers would have been esteemed quite remarkable, if only they had been lodged in a less uneducated breast, and if his wit had not been so broad and so constantly offensive. The worthy his-

[1] Lact. mortes 9. The Christian writer is indignant with him for making so light of his mother's honour. The lady appears to have been misled by the god's appearing under the guise of a dragon: Aur. epit. xl. 17.

It is curious, but (I suppose) irrelevant, that one *Galerius Maximus* was the proconsul who sentenced St Cyprian, while Galerius Caesar is known in that region as *Maximus*: see Act. S. Maximil. quoted above, p. 45.

torian regrets that Galerius had not followed the example of the Persian Cyrus, and studied learning, grace, and, above all, a pleasant manner, without which, says he, the advantages of nature are but a sorry and despicable sight[1].

We might expect a Dacian giant to be lecherous and drunken[2]. But even Lactantius hardly indulges us with an account of these peccadilloes. The fierce lusts which characterised Herculius were not the chief characteristics of Galerius. They were almost lost to sight in the fright begotten by his unheard-of savagery. Even according to one of his most lenient critics, his notions of justice were of the rough and ready sort, not of the philosophical complexion[3]. The terror of his character was increased by his imposing stature and bulk[4]. Finally he was as superstitious as he was ignorant[5].

Galerius had been, from his childhood up, indoctrinated with the most fanatical form of the prevailing nature-worship. His mother was an abandoned devotee of the Phrygian

[1] Aur. Vict. l. c.: *adeo miri naturae officiis, ut ea si a doctis pectoribus proficiscerentur neque insulsitate offenderent, haud dubie praecipua haberentur. quare compertum est eruditionem, elegantiam, comitatem praesertim, principibus necessarias esse, cum sine his naturae bona quasi incompta, aut etiam horrida despectui sint: contraque ea Persarum regi Cyro aeternam gloriam parauerint.* Victor is speaking of Constantius as well, but it is plain that he is thinking chiefly of Galerius.

[2] Anon. Valesii c. 11. Some of the Byzantines tell horrid tales of his evil life. Mr Hunziker thinks he cannot have been a drunkard, because Maximinus *was*. In justice we must state that Eutropius, x. 2, gives him a very pretty character, as *probe moratus;* and that the Church writers seem not to consider these Emperors as neighbours against whom it is a sin to bear false witness, especially as Galerius was at deadly feud with Constantine.

[3] Aur. epit. xl. 15: *inculta agrestique iustitia:* yet the same account makes him *satis laudabilis.*

[4] Lact. mortes 9: *status celsus, caro ingens et in horrendam magnitudinem diffusa et inflata.* (So also all the authorities.) And again: *et uerbis et actibus et aspectu terrori omnibus ac formidini fuit.*

[5] Mr Hunziker tries to prove, or rather asserts, that he was a Neoplatonic philosopher,—an attempt which I cannot but consider both blind and halt.

goddess of the hills. It was doubtless in the midst of the pious ecstasies, which such a religion promoted, that she had received the attentions of her scaly admirer; the horrid orgies supply us with the rationale both of the fact, and of the woman's delusion with regard to it. Romula (that was her name) had conceived a bitter hatred against the Christians, because they fasted and prayed whenever she invited them to join the entertainments, which, when she grew rich, she frequently provided for the inhabitants of her village. If there had been any tendency in Galerius to take the same view of Christianity as Diocletian took, his mother was at hand to rouse him to a more zealous heathendom. But there was little need of such an extrinsic stimulus[1].

The Evil Beast—to use Lactantius' favourite synonym for Galerius—now presented himself in the court of his father-in-law at Nicomedia on a mischievous errand. The whole winter between the years 302 and 303 was spent in trying to persuade or alarm Diocletian into the accursed work of persecution. At first, for a long while, the deliberations were conducted in perfect secrecy[2]. No one was admitted to their counsels. All Nicomedia was on tiptoe, thinking that they were discussing high matters of state, as indeed they were. The great politician resolutely refused to do anything of the sort. In vain the ex-neatherd stormed and blustered. In

[1] Lact. mort. 11: *cuius furoris hanc causam fuisse cognoui.* He probably overrates the lady's influence. By hasty reading, Hunziker, p. 151, mistakes this clause to mean that the failure of the omens (which had just been narrated) was the sole cause of Diocletian's persecution! A second glance would have shewn that *hanc* refers to what follows, and that the *furor* is not Diocletian's but his son-in-law's.

[2] Lact. mort. 11: *habito inter se per totam hiemem consilio, cum nemo admitteretur et omnes de summo statu reipublicae tractari arbitrarentur, diu senex furori eius repugnauit.* Several of the German critics ask slily, how, if no one was admitted, Lactantius knew what

vain he pleaded that Diocletian had already once made a little crusade against the Cross[1]. The old prince pointed out that a Christian persecution would shake the whole earth: that if it could possibly be avoided, it was a pity to shed blood: this Maximian might perhaps be as ignorant of history as his namesake in the West[2], but Diocletian, who was a historical student, knew well that nothing was more agreeable to this very peculiar people than to shed their blood sooner than yield to the reasonable commands of pious Emperors[3].

But the Caesar was the younger and the stronger man: and a determination to do has always an advantage over the determination not to do. At length Diocletian broke down so far as to offer to forbid the profession of the faith within the walls of his palace and under the eagles of his legions. He was sure it was a mistaken policy. It was certainly distasteful to himself. The army would suffer greatly by the loss. Diocletian would have to part with servants to whom he was much attached. Still if the matter went no further than this, it would require no alteration of existing law. Even the Christians, though they might think it hard, could not call it a persecution; for no one was to be tortured or killed, only peaceably expelled from their posts. The gods, if they did indeed feel jealous of Christianity, would be satisfied with

they were discussing. It was easy enough to see, from the results of the conference.

[1] Lact. mort. 10: *quia iam principium fecerat.* The words follow immediately after the account of the occurrence mentioned on p. 42. But we may well doubt whether Galerius knew of that occurrence at all.

[2] Cf. the Panegyric (!) quoted by Gibbon, vol. II. p. 116.

[3] Lact. mort. 11: *ostendens quam perniciosum esset inquietari orbem terrae, fundi sanguinem multorum: illos libenter mori solere.* The words represent exactly what we should suppose that Diocletian actually would urge.

this official purification of the state. Would not this content Galerius? But no. That zealot, encouraged at gaining one decided step, was determined to execute now his full design[1]. Before long he had carried another point, though Diocletian fought manfully inch by inch. He persuaded the old man not to rely solely upon his own profound wisdom, but to take the advice of confidential friends[2]. A few dignified generals and a few civilians of high position were accordingly called in to aid in the deliberations.

Among these was an able man named Hierocles, who had raised himself from a *juge de pays* to be President of Bithynia, and in that capacity left a name long remembered, and not loved, among the confessors of that province[3]. But Hie-

[1] Lact. mort. 11: *satis esse si palatinos tantum ac milites ab ea religione prohiberet: nec tamen deflectere potuit praecipitis hominis insaniam. placuit ergo amicorum sententiam experiri.*

[2] Our author makes this the occasion of an ungenerous—and at any rate a misplaced—attack upon the Emperor. "He was," says Lactantius, "a man of such subtle wickedness, that whenever he had determined to do anything good, he did it without consulting anyone, that he alone might have the praise; but when the design was an evil one, he knew that it must meet with reprehension, and therefore summoned a number of councillors to his assistance, in order that all his own faults might be laid to the charge of others." It must be owned that this statement gathers colour from several other passages. Eutr. ix. 26 says he was one who *seueritatem suam aliena inuidia uellet explere.* In x. 1 again he speaks of his *suspecta prudentia.* Suidas, who says of him (s. v.) πᾶσαν σκληρὰν πρᾶξιν ἑτέροις ἀνατιθείς, is of course not an independent witness. There may possibly be some foundation for the libel, but we must remember how easy the accusation was to frame, and that Eutropius hated Diocletian for political reasons with little less than the *odium theologicum* of Lactantius.—Here, at any rate, the charge is absurd and inconsistent. Diocletian, according to Lactantius, most earnestly resists the invitation to persecute,—and then calls in a council to cloke his own bloody eagerness. At the same time this helps to prove that his reluctance is historical: Lactantius could never have invented a phenomenon which he was so put about to explain.

[3] Lact. mort. 16: *ex uicario praesidem.* Lactantius evidently means to imply that Hierocles had been promoted very rapidly. Therefore it is

rocles[1] had another claim, besides his high office, to sit on a council which affected the Christians. He was well known as a controversialist, and either had written, or was intending to write, an ingenious polemical work upon the subject. From the violent invective with which Lactantius cudgels the author, we should have concluded that the book was a clever one, even if he had not expressly mentioned its biting, incisive character[2]. Many of the arguments were not urged for the first time, nor for the last. Somehow he had obtained a copy of the Scriptures, and he set himself to work to show up all the discrepancies and contradictions to be found there. He discovered so many, and displayed such an intimate knowledge of the sacred writings, as to suggest a doubt whether he were not

obvious that he cannot mean here, as usual, a *uicarius praefecti*, an office of very great dignity, for which see Wietersheim *Völkerwanderung* vol. III. p. 90. For the change from *uicarius* to *praeses* would have been a fall from the style and rank of *Spectabilis* to that of a mere *Clarissimus*. In the Acts of St Marcellus the *praeses* (or procurator) of Tingitana speaks of the *uicarius* as *dominus meus*. Ducange gives (s. v. § 2): *qui uice comitis aut alterius iudicis partes exequitur in pagis uel minoribus oppidis*.—I am inclined to think that Lactantius means to say that Hierocles was only a *uicarius* at the time of the conference, and was rewarded for his good advice with a presidency by the time that Donatus fell under his jurisdiction. A passage in the *Institutes*, v. 11, seems to favour this: *non enim honor ille aut prouectio dignitatis fuit*. The expression in the same work v. 2: *qui erat tum e numero iudicum*, is indecisive either way.

[1] There can be no reasonable doubt of the identity of the nameless judge in the *Institutes* with the Hierocles of the *Deaths*: see Tillemont, *Mem. Eccl.* vol. XIII. p. 333: but his identification with the Praefectus Augustalis of Alexandria in the latter part of the persecution is much more suspicious. Of course he must not be confounded with the witty philosopher of the next century. The following account of his work is taken only from Lactantius; for I must own to not having read the book in which Eusebius endeavours to refute him.

[2] Lact. inst. v. 2: *mordacius scripsit*. The words about the scriptural argument are as follows: *ita falsitatem scripturae sacrae arguere conatus est, tamquam sibi esset tota contraria; nam quaedam capita, quae repugnare sibi uidebantur, exposuit, adeo multa, adeo intima enumerans, ut aliquando ex eadem disciplina fuisse uideatur*.

himself an apostate from the evangelical faith. He did not acknowledge (as many other pagans did) the truth of the Gospel miracles—asserting that the Apostles were the wilful promoters of a forgery, without seeing (as Lactantius observes with great justice) how inconsistent this view was with his own hearty admission that they were unlearned and ignorant men. But granting the miracles, *argumenti causa*, he proceeded to shew that they were not a conclusive proof of divinity[1]. To support this modern-seeming argument, he entered into an elaborate comparison of the life of the Redeemer with that of Apollonius of Tyana, making it plain that the works of the Greek were much the weightier;—and yet, he said, Apollonius had been too modest to court, and had never received, those divine honours to which he had so much more claim than Christ. Of the constructive part of the work Lactantius tells us little; but we can guess what it was like. The exaltation of the great wonder-worker is enough to stamp Hierocles as a Neoplatonist, for Apollonius was the great hero of that subtle school. But for this point we are not left to conjecture alone. The epilogue of the book contained a recommendation of the peculiar monotheism taught at Alexandria. Jupiter took a high rank among the semi-personal powers by which the will (if will there was) of the Supreme Being was accomplished[2]. The author of the *Divine Institutes* boasts that

[1] Hier. ap. Lact. inst. v. 3: *nos sapientiores esse, qui mirabilibus factis non statim fidem diuinitatis adiunximus.*

[2] Cf. Burckhardt *Zeit Constantins* p. 249. The old gods appear sometimes mere allegorical personifications of the powers of nature, sometimes as active personal "demons." The Supreme Being, which embraces and includes them all, is not strictly a pantheistic conception, inasmuch as it resides in the universe but is not actually identified with it. Lact. l. c.: *prosecutus summi dei laudes, quem regem, quem maximum, quem opificem rerum, quem fontem bonorum, quem parentem omnium, quem factorem altoremque uiuentium confessus es, ademisti Ioui tuo regnum, eumque*

Hierocles himself had made the lords of Olympus slaves to the true God. And in fact we may almost say that he had something of the sort in view. He was sincerely anxious to find some common ground with Christianity. His treatise, which bore the name of *Philalethes*, had no other intention than to win the Christian philosophers peaceably to what its author thought the truth[1]. Lactantius himself confesses that Hierocles was very anxious to avoid the appearance of an attack. He even adopted the apologetic style, and as Tertullian dedicates one of his apologies to the heathen, *Ad*, not *Contra Nationes*, so this book by the President of Bithynia was dedicated *Ad Christianos*[2].

But in spite of the friendliness of his book, there was no doubt which way the President would vote. It was one of the first religious principles of the new Platonics to worship the divine Being according to ancestral custom[3], and the Church was not yet considered to have won the rights of prescription. Hierocles, who had the same intense desire

summa potestate depulsum in ministrorum numerum redegisti. epilogus itaque te tuus arguit stultitiae uanitatis erroris. affirmas enim deos esse: et illos tamen subicis, et mancipas ei deo cuius religionem conaris euertere.

[1] He says (l. c.): *ausus est libros suos nefarios ac dei hostes φιλαληθεῖς annotare.*

[2] Lact. inst. v. 2: *non contra Christianos, ne inimice insectari uideretur, sed ad Christianos, ut humane ac benigne consulere putaretur.* This is said in order to contrast Hierocles with another writer, who, to curry favour with the persecuting party, *tres libros euomuit contra religionem nomenque Christianum*, on the ground that it was the philosopher's duty to deliver the simple from the devices of the deceivers and bring them back to the true worship of the gods. This and some other details make me think that Hierocles' *Philalethes* was published *before* the persecution began. Lactantius says that the other writer was unanimously condemned for his want of generosity in attacking the Christians at that trying time; but he does not associate Hierocles in the condemnation. Neander I. 236 treats the *Philalethes* throughout with far less courtesy than it deserves.

[3] Cf. the passage in Porphyry's letter to his wife quoted by Neander I. 233, where his version of πάτρια needs a slight but important modification.

to spread the blessings of truth which characterised Queen Mary I. of England, would not refuse to call attention to the excellencies of his preaching by the pillory and the gridiron. We may even gather from the way in which Lactantius speaks of him as the author of the persecution, that he had gone out of his way to bring it about, and had joined his reasoning with the less intellectual influences of Romula to urge Galerius on[1].

It is perhaps hardly probable that Constantine was a member of the conference: but if so, his enmity with Galerius, as well as his own personal feelings, doubtless ranged him on the side of the wiser Emperor. If Diocletian had had the courage to invite the attendance of his Grand Chamberlain or of the revered Bishop of Nicomedia, perhaps he might have won the day: but as all the council were Pagans and some of them Pagans of that frenzied zeal which so often betokens a dying faith, the judgment went against us. Those who were not themselves superstitious thought it more prudent to side with the Emperor who was to succeed, than with the Emperor who was to retire, within the year[2].

Diocletian, disappointed to find his sagacious policy defeated by fanaticism and self-interest, still refused to give his

[1] Lact. inst. v. 2: *auctor in primis faciendae persecutionis fuit;* mortes 16: *auctor et consiliarius ad persecutionem faciendam fuit,* where *auctor* certainly implies some share in the agitation *before* he became a *consiliarius.*

The passage in inst. v. 11: *uidi ego in Bithynia praesidem gaudio mirabiliter elatum, quod unus qui per biennium magna uirtute restiterat postremo cedere uisus esset,* shows how far from bloody-mindedness Hierocles was: he only wanted to obtain conversions.

[2] Lact. mort. 11: *quidam proprio aduersus Christianos odio inimicos deorum et hostes religionum publicarum tollendos esse censuerunt; et qui aliter sentiebant, intellecta hominis uoluntate, uel timentes uel gratificari uolentes, in eandem sententiam congruerunt.*

consent. But the intensity of the struggle had shaken his self-confidence. He was exhausted. After all, these men might possibly be right. In desperation of support from men, he once more thought of seeking it from heaven. If the oracle of Apollo, the Sun-god, at Miletus, should respond that it was better not to persecute (and surely he would, if he were a wise divinity), the triumph over Galerius would be complete: superstition would be met on its own ground. A soothsayer was accordingly despatched to put the tremendous question. But, whatever the feelings of Apollo himself may have been, the feelings of his prophet or prophetess were distinctly on the side of the old religion[1]. The old Emperor could hold out no longer. To refuse to act upon the oracle, after he had consulted it, would have signified not only the recantation of the least uncertain article in Diocletian's eclectic creed, but also the abandonment of the state religion, the disestablishment of a faith which was still the faith of the majority: and it required a firmer seat even than his own to take so vast a step. Utterly wearied out, and with a heavy and foreboding heart, though shaken in his own mind and probably half persuaded by arguments and oracles[2], he at last deferred to Galerius' wishes, only with the express and expressive reserve that no blood was to be shed in the transaction[3].

Such is, without doubt, the true account of the origin of

[1] It ought, however, to be stated that the Milesian Apollo spoke without the intervention of men, from a cave's mouth. His answer on the present occasion was a choice example of the perplexing *ψευδόμενος* argument: it was impossible, he said, for him to speak the truth, because of the righteous men upon the earth: see Eus. uit. Const. II. 50.

[2] Lact. mort. 11: *traductus est itaque a proposito.*

[3] Id. ib.: *hanc moderationem tenere conatus est; eam rem sine sanguine transigi.*

the Persecution of Diocletian. But as this is an essay, not a history, we are forced to leave the clear calm atmosphere of simple narrative, and come down into the clamours of the battle of criticism. This natural and intelligible story has suffered unspeakably by the varied barbarities of wrangling historians. For there is a certain class of critics, to whom (it would seem) the only value of contemporary evidence is that it suggests an opposite view. To such writers the fact that Lactantius records the reluctance of Diocletian to persecute the Church, is all but a proof that his heart was set upon the bloody business. There is a kind of disease (if we may so speak) known among German authors by the name of *Tendenz*[1], of which many critics have so morbid a horror, that they appear (as men are said to do in time of epidemics) to have contracted the sickness themselves through the mere reaction of their fear. Now the plague-spot of *Tendenz* (sad to say) appears very decidedly upon Lactantius; and the consequence is that his account is now entirely shunned, or else pitiably mutilated, even in those parts which are quite unaffected by the disease. It will be found (I trust) that in this essay sufficient care has been taken to make due allowance for the bias of the original authorities; but in the case which we are now considering, it is not Lactantius' theological prejudice which makes him assert Diocletian's hatred of the thought of persecuting. Nay, as we have already seen, the author of the "Deaths of the Persecutors" is interested to paint Diocletian as odious in his personal character, and as hostile to the Church, as he can possibly make him. He records most grudgingly the old Emperor's successive resistances,—how he is torn along from point to point, grasping at everything in

[1] Cf. Hunziker, p. 121.

the way that may strengthen his position: and at last with cruel sagacity he ascribes his conduct to that most repulsive trait which his enemies affected to find in his character, of using other men's vices to conceal his own[1]. If then in this case we take off all that is due to Lactantius' malevolent bias, we have, as a residuum, the historical fact that the persecution of Diocletian was wrung from him, after a stubborn and protracted resistance, by the violence and arguments of Galerius.

There is every reason to suppose that the author of the *Mortes* was as perfectly informed as anyone could well be upon such a matter. Lactantius[2] was living in Nicomedia at the time. From the number of Christian servants and officers in the household, it is probable that the Church in the city knew a vast deal of what was going on within that secluded palace. But there is some ground for thinking that Lactantius had a special connexion with the court. It would appear that Diocletian, who was a patron of letters, was desirous of founding good schools in his new capital, and turning his eyes towards Africa—at that time the great home of Latin literature—was attracted by what he heard of the pure Ciceronian eloquence of Arnobius' young disciple, and summoned him from Sicca to fill one of the literary chairs[3]. This official

[1] Here I have the pleasure of agreeing with Dr Bernhardt, who opposes the *Mortes* everywhere, through thick and thin. On p. 11 of his pamphlet, *Diokletian in seinem Verhältnisse zu den Christen*, he says: *Eine solche Darstellung kann ich nicht anders als gehässig nennen; ist die Angabe richtig so kann man darin mit demselben Rechte Diokletian's weise Mässigung bewundern.* Of the parallel in Eutropius he says: *Man ist wohl berechtigt, diese Notiz darauf zu beschränken, dass Diokletian, indem er sich veranlasst glaubte, zu strengen Massregeln zu greifen, einige Male hierin seinem eignen Urtheile sich nicht allein überliess, sondern Andere zu Rathe zog.* The explanation is quite just.

[2] It seems so perfectly obvious that Lactantius was the author, that I do not enter upon the proof.

[3] Lact. inst. v. 2: *ego cum in Bithynia oratorias litteras accitus docerem.* Cf. Hier. de uir. illustr. 80. *Arnobii*

position doubtless gave him more or less opportunity of learning the news of his imperial benefactor; but it also led the way to a connexion with one who was more intimate with Diocletian's views and purposes than any other living man. Constantine the Great had been residing, from the time when he was quite a boy, in the court of Nicomedia: and even when the old Emperor travelled in the East, Constantine was the indispensable companion of his journeys. All this while he was learning at leisure the arts of government from the lips and conduct of the greatest master of them[1]. It must have been during these years in the Bithynian capital that the acquaintance was formed between the philosopher and the politician, which led to the subsequent appointment of Lactantius as literary instructor to Crispus, the eldest son of Constantine. When we take into consideration all these points of contact with the imperial centre, it is difficult to imagine a position more favourable for finding out the motives of the persecution, than the position of Lactantius. In his representation of the attitudes of Galerius and Diocletian towards the persecution, he may indeed be misled by hatred, but hardly by ignorance.

discipulus, sub Diocletiano principe accitus cum Flauio grammatico. St Jerome does not say *ab*, but the word *accitus* certainly seems to imply it; cf. Tillemont. *Mem. Eccl.* xvi. 341, 342.

[1] Eust. uit. Const. I. xii. 2 : μέσος δὲ τούτοις Κωνσταντῖνος, παῖς ἄρτι νέος ἁπαλὸς ὡραῖός τ' ἄνθους ἰούλοις, οἷά τις αὐτὸς ἐκεῖνος ὁ τοῦ Θεοῦ θεράπων, τυραννικαῖς ἐφήδρευσεν ἑστίαις. This is taken from a very neat comparison of Constantine with Moses, brought up in the house of the persecutor Pharaoh, and learning all the Egyptian wisdom. So again ch. xix. 1 : ἤδη δ' ἄρα ἐκ παιδὸς ἐπὶ τὸν νεανίαν διαβὰς τιμῆς τῆς πρώτης παρ' αὐτοῖς ἠξιοῦτο· οἷον αὐτὸν καὶ ἡμεῖς ἔγνωμεν, τὸ Παλαιστινῶν διερχόμενον ἔθνος σὺν τῷ πρεσβυτέρῳ τῶν βασιλέων. Cf. also II. li. 1; Lact. *Mort.* 18: *sanctissimus adulescens: ... eratque tunc praesens, iam pridem a Diocletiano factus tribunus ordinis primi.* The words in Zonar. xii. 33 D seem to corroborate these facts, though they are slightly mistaken: τοῦτον ... ὁ πατὴρ μειράκιον ὄντα τῷ Γαλερίῳ εἰς ὁμηρείαν παρέσχετο.

The very scanty notices which we find elsewhere confirm fully the account given in the *Mortes*. Eusebius, who at the time when his eighth book was written had no special sources of information, but represents the current opinion of the day, is perfectly aware that Galerius was present at Nicomedia at the time of the outbreak of the persecution[1]. The statement that the Milesian Apollo was consulted, is corroborated by a no less important authority than Constantine himself; and that not in a speech made up for him by Eusebius, but in an edict issued officially to all the provinces of the realm[2]. And this is not all. Again and again the Bishop of Caesarea ascribes unreservedly the origin of the persecution to Galerius[3]. His testimony is all the more valuable because he does not expatiate upon the fact, but records it simply as being what everyone knew already. And furthermore his expressions about the part taken by Galerius belong to very different epochs of his life. That which he wrote as a studious young clergyman at Caesarea or in Egypt, he repeated with the same simple assurance after he had become intimate with the

[1] Eus. hist. eccl. VIII. 5: *δυεῖν ἐπιπαρόντων κατὰ τὴν αὐτὴν πόλιν βασιλέων.*

[2] ap. Eus. uit. Const. 50, 51. He thinks fit to take a very solemn oath about the statement.

[3] Eus. VIII. xvi. 2: *τῷ δ' αὐθέντῃ τῶν κακῶν ἐπεξιούσης καὶ πρωτοστάτῃ τῆς τοῦ παντὸς διωγμοῦ κακίας ἐπιχολουμένης*; and in the Appendix, sect. 1: *τοῦτον δὴ λόγος ἔχει πρῶτον αἴτιον τῆς τοῦ διωγμοῦ καταστῆναι συμφορᾶς*, and again, sect. 4: *ὃν δὴ καὶ ἀρχηγὸν τοῦ παντὸς ἔφαμεν γεγονέναι διωγμοῦ*; uita Const. I. lvi.: *τὸν πρωτοστάτην τῶν κακῶν, ὅστις ποτὲ ἦν ἐκεῖνος, θεηλάτῳ μάστιγι πληγέντα*; and ch. lviii. 1: *ὁ μὲν τοῦ διωγμοῦ καταρξας.* Mr Hunziker, pp. 126, 127, discusses carefully the relative dates of these works of Eusebius. It seems quite certain that the 8th book was written long before the 9th, the 10th and (of course) the "Life of Constantine" much later still. I cannot regard the little Appendix of Book 8 as spurious: I have little doubt that it was added by the author in a later edition of the work.—This consensus against Galerius is in no wise due to Constantinian partisanship: an animus of that kind would make the reference much more explicit.

Emperor who was in the secret. And though we can set little historical value on the fact that Ruffinus translates him without modifying, it is more important to notice that as late as the middle of the eleventh century, when the name of Diocletian was as indissolubly connected with the persecution as it is now, Cedrenus, though he fancies that Diocletian's persecution had been raging for a long while past, introduces an entirely new contest, in the year 303, under the auspices of Galerius[1].

And this is positively all the evidence that we can glean from the original authorities. There is not a single witness in all antiquity who can be summoned to prove that the war against the Christians originated with the great Augustus[2]. Diocletian's own voice, alas! can no longer be heard; for an

[1] Cedr. vol. I. p. 47 (Bonn 1838): *τῷ ιη' ἔτει Διοκλητιανοῦ...ὁ Γαλλέριος διωγμὸν κατὰ τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἤγειρεν.* (This exasperating writer confounds *Maximians* and *Maximins*, and consulship-dates with years of the reign, without any suspicion of the confusion he has made, yet he has preserved a good deal of curious information.) A very important corroboration is to be found in the Acts of St Agape (Ruin. p. 348) ch. 2: *cum igitur persecutio a Maximiano imperatore aduersus Christianos illata esset:* as the scene is at Thessalonica, Herculius cannot be meant. Cf. also Prud. peri steph. x. 31; cf. Niceph. Greg. xxv. 36.

Greg. Naz. or. III. p. 93 (Paris, 1630) seems to take the other view: *μήτε Διοκλητιανὸς ὁ πρῶτος ἐνυβρίσας Χριστιανοῖς μήτε ὁ τοῦτον ἐκδεξάμενος καὶ ὑπερβάλλων Μαξιμιανὸς μήτε Μαξιμῖνος ὁ μετ' ἐκείνους καὶ ὑπὲρ ἐκείνους διώκτης*: but this does not refer to the *authorship* of the persecution; it merely means that Diocletian's reign came first in point of time.

I believe I do not exaggerate when I say that on the whole the Fathers of the subsequent age, of the East as well as of the West, more often refer to the persecution as the work of *Maximian* (i. e. Herculius) than as that of Diocletian: see e. g. Athan. (at Alexandria) ad sol. uit. ag. p. 853 A (Paris, 1627), *τὸ πρῶτον, ὅτε γέγονε καὶ ἐπὶ Μαξιμιανῷ τῷ πάππῳ Κωνσταντίου διωγμός*; Hosius (Spain) ap. Ath. ibid. p. 838; Hier. (Palestine) comm. in Naum, 69; Hilar. (Gaul) contra Constant. 7 and 8 (this may mean Galerius, but probably not); and most emphatically Orosius XXVI. (Spain).

[2] Except *possibly* Aur. Vict. Caess. xxxix. 45, *ueterrimae religiones castissime seruatae.* I have taken the trouble to glance through all the Byzantine historians on the reign of Diocletian, but can find nothing in all their bewildering self-contradictions which throws any light upon the origin of the persecution.

unkind fate has destroyed the preambles of the three edicts which are traced to him[1]. There is not an inscription[2], not even a coin[3] which tells us anything of the mighty conflict. And the total failure of archaeological assistance is of a piece with the striking literary phenomena. A strange and ominous silence reigns, with regard to this crowning topic, among all the heathen writers. Zosimus indeed and Ammian are unfortunately both wanting in this part; but the former, at any rate, if we may judge from his usual manner of dealing with the Christian religion, had said but little on the subject[4]. Eutropius and the two Victors seem as though the very name of the Christians was unknown to them. The charming series of the Lives of the Emperors unhappily stops short at Numerian's death. Vopiscus had proposed to write a history of the

Such passages as Malal. 310 are perfectly vague, and to be explained (if it is needed) in the same manner as the passage of St Gregory quoted in the last note.

[1] Galerius ap. Lact. mort. 34, Eus. hist. eccl. VIII. xvii. 3, speaks for himself, but not for Diocletian. What would we not give for a copy of Domitius' careful digest of the penal laws against us! See Lact. div. inst. II.

[2] De Rossi finds but one Christian inscription at Rome which can be tortured so as to refer to the persecution (No. 30). Mr King has pointed out to me, in the Museo Borbonico, plate liv., an exquisite head in wax, which, having been found with a truncated skeleton, may perhaps have done duty for the natural head of a martyr under Diocletian, a coin of his lying in the tomb: but even if there were not several *ifs*, the discovery could elucidate little except the high state of the art.

[3] The coins of Diocletian and Maximian inscribed *Ioui Fulgeratori*, and those bearing Hercules with the Hydra, have usually been made to refer to Christianity, but without any real ground. The Hydra is but one of a whole series of Hercules' labours on the coinage of Maximian.

[4] Burckhardt, p. 57, ingeniously conjectures that Zosimus had said too much, and was accordingly mutilated by the Christians; he compares the mutilation by the pagans, for an opposite reason, of Cicero's *de Natura Deorum*. He does not say the same of Ammian, though this is a far less improbable case. Zosimus is so shy of speaking directly on the religious question, that he barely notices even Julian's declaration of his sentiments and consequent unpopularity, and hastens on to political matters; III. 9.

tetrarchy in a more ambitious style than he had before attempted, but it is uncertain whether he ever began the work[1]. And we have to lament in vain the inestimable loss of the memoirs published by Eusthenius, the private secretary of Diocletian[2]. But for our special purpose the loss is perhaps not great. The persecutions of Decius and Valerian pass entirely unnoticed by the pagan authors. Vopiscus has but three scornful notices of the triumphant religion, and of these, two are merely introduced as good stories. To those who cared for the old religion the whole subject was sore. A stinging imputation, a bit of scandalous chit-chat, the oblique thrust of a sarcastic *bon mot* from Hadrian or Aurelian, declamatory lamentations over the decline of Rome since the cessation of the secular games—these are the usual ways in which the enemies of Christianity betray their feeling with regard to its encroachments[3]. However much satisfaction they might feel in thinking of the past sufferings of the churchmen, a direct history of the persecutions is the very last thing they would have been likely to write. Mobs, judges, emperors, had done their worst; and yet the sect was spreading more rapidly than ever. Fear and jealousy and wounded pride suggested that the wisest course was to say nothing, and pretend that there was nothing to be said.

But in spite of the formidable consensus of antient authority, almost all our modern reconstructors of history have seen fit to ascribe the persecution to the old Augustus. All, indeed, are willing to admit that Galerius took most delight in the work, and would gladly have dealt more violently

[1] Vop. Prob. 1.

[2] Vop. Carin. 18.

[3] See (e.g.) Vop. Aur. 20, Saturn. 7, and 8; Zosim. ii. 7, ii. 29, iv. 2. Aelius Lampridius is an exception: he records some most valuable (even if doubtful) pieces of information, to flatter the Christian prince whom he addresses.

than his father-in-law, but they see so many reasons why the Christian faith ought to have been put down for the benefit of the empire, that they conceive it impossible for Diocletian to have neglected so to do.

Among these many reasons which are adduced, there is none, perhaps, more weighty than that which is drawn from the Roman ideal of the state, and the very peculiar relation in which politics stood to religion[1]. It is argued, and with perfect justice, that the Church and the old Roman Empire were utterly incompatible, and must in course of time come into collision with each other. Neander with his usual excellent judgment has discerned many cogent reasons, and Mr Hunziker does well to follow him[2]. It is not necessary in this

[1] This reason is brought forward more prominently by Neander, I. p. 196, Baur, *Christenthum der* III. *ersten Jahrhunderte*, p. 431, and by Hunziker pp. 138, 152, than by any other writers. Neander admits, however, that Diocletian would never have come to the point without Galerius.

[2] Neander I. pp. 117—124. See especially p. 117: "The idea of the state was the highest idea of ethics, and within that was included all actual realisation of the highest good:—hence the development of all other goods pertaining to humanity was made dependent on this. Thus the *religious* element also was subordinated to the *political*. There were none but state religions and national gods. It was first and only Christianity that could overcome this principle of antiquity, release men from the bondage of the world, subvert *particularism* and the all subjecting force of the political element by its own generalizing Theism, by the awakened consciousness of the oneness of God's image in all, by the idea of the kingdom of God as the highest good, comprehending all other goods in itself, which was substituted in place of the state as the realisation of the highest good, whereby the state was necessitated to recognise a higher power over itself. Looked at from this point of view, which was the one actually taken by the antient world, a defection from the religion of the state could not appear otherwise than as a crime against the state." Cf. Hunziker, p. 143: *Die Eigenthümlichkeit ihres Bekenntnisses brachte ja mit sich, dass sie nicht in den Synkretismus der heidnischen Religionen eingingen; die Götter der Heiden galten ihnen als böse Dämonen. Das Christenthum musste entweder herrschen, oder es musste vernichtet werden, oder ignorirt sein können, da es jedes gleichberechtigte friedliche Zusammenleben mit dem Heidenthum ausschloss;* and on p. 146: *Im römischen Reiche waren*

place to follow out these causes of contention in detail. The State claimed to be supreme over all religions, and in fact to make them a part of its own machinery. The Holy Catholic Church believed, and still believes, that there is a law higher than the law of the State. Christianity is absolute. The State's ideal of religion was a syncretism (to use a word the German authors love) of national and partial religions: if the deities of a newly conquered nation were willing to take a seat in the Pantheon, the seats were free to all-comers; if not, that religion could not be tolerated. The Holy Catholic Church refused this abominable proposal, for Christ had no concord with Belial. Christianity is universal[1]. The State, holding that all religions were on an equality, could suffer no contest between one deity and another, no crying down of any deities which it had taken under its protection. The Holy Catholic Church was charged with the message of regeneration, and could not rest till men's souls were freed from the foul tyranny of these dumb and devilish idols. Christianity is aggressive. The State was morbidly sensitive of the formation of any societies which might give it trouble even locally. The Holy Catholic Church, while fully recognising the authority of the Sovereign, thinks, or (alas!) thought, that the first allegiance which was owed to man was owed to her consecrated Pontiffs[2]. Christianity is corporate. For all these reasons, and many, many more, the Church inevitably

die religiösen Culte im engsten Verbande mit den staatlichen Einrichtungen; der Staat nahm jene unter seinen Schutz und sie dienten ihm; oder aber sie wollten nicht in den Staatsorganismus einfügen und ihm unterordnen lassen, dann stiess er sie, soweit seine Macht ging, aus dem Reiche aus.

[1] The commonest periphrase for the Catholic religion in Eusebius, is ἡ εἰς τὸν τῶν ὅλων Θεὸν εὐσέβεια.

[2] See the grand passage in Eusebius' sermon at the consecration of Tyre Cathedral, *Hist. Eccl.* x. iv. 23.

must have clashed, and did clash again and again, with the old Roman State[1].

But it had no longer the old Roman State to deal with. It is entirely and utterly misleading to speak of the persecution of Diocletian as the climax of his work of restoration[2]. A tremendous change had come over the political aspect of the world since the death of Carus. Diocletian had deliberately, openly, ostentatiously, abandoned the old Roman ideal. In his masterly mode of meeting the wants of the empire, he had not hesitated to sacrifice almost everything which outwardly recalled the days of Augustus, or of that contemplative prince whom he was wont to claim as his exemplar. The greatest radical of his time, he knew that "a froward retention of custom is as turbulent a thing as an innovation, and they that reverence too much old times, are but a scorn to the new[3]." He had taught the world explicitly that it was not a republic, but a great kingdom like the kingdoms of Xerxes and of Narseus. It was one of the cleverest of Galerius' indelicate satires, when he said that the empire ought no longer to be called the empire of Rome, but the empire of Dacia[4]. A compulsory attendance at sacred rites was surely not a more important

[1] For much of what is contained in these sentences, I am indebted to a lecture of Professor Westcott's, which I heard some years ago.

[2] Hunziker p. 153: *Dass dahin die Consequenz der Restauration Diocletians führen musste, liegt auf der Hand; es war gleichsam der Abschluss seines Werks, die Krönung des Gebäudes, wenn das letzte mächtigste Hinderniss eines geordneten römischen Staatsorganismus beseitigt wurde.*

[3] Bacon, Essay XXIV.

[4] Lact. mort. 27: *olim quidem ille, ut nomen imperatoris acceperat, hostem se Romani nominis erat professus, cuius titulum immutari uolebat, ut non Romanum imperium, sed Daciscum cognominaretur.* The saying shews such a quick perception of the position of affairs, and such a barbarous want of diplomatic reticence, that I feel it must really have been blurted out by Galerius; at any rate Lactantius understands it too little to have invented it for him.

thing to retain than those old republican titles and institutions which were laid aside[1]. It had been found that the apparent dismemberment of the Roman dominion into four several parts, under four several princes, was the means of uniting the nations more solidly than ever they had been united before. Why should the apparent dismemberment of the state, by winking at the Christians' abstinence from idol-temples, tend to any more unfavourable results? Diocletian was too sagacious a person to suppose that a man must necessarily be a traitor because he objected to scatter incense before an Emperor's statue[2]. The man might be ridiculously superstitious, and provokingly obstinate,—for of course it is not pretended that Diocletian sympathized with scruples of conscience—but he need not be a foe of the state. Christianity had been so long a time in the world, and (at any rate since Gallienus' days) in such an open conspicuous position, that a man like the Emperor could not fail to see that some of the best subjects in the realm and the best soldiers in the army were Christians. Diocletian was not the wise man that he is always taken for, if he had not learned by this time to repose as much confidence in those who would not worship his images, as Queen Elizabeth reposed, at the time of the Armada, in those who abjured her supremacy. He who had done more than any man that had ever lived to break down the old Roman system, was not a likely person to attempt its partial restoration from the religious side[3].

[1] See Spanheim *de Usu Numismatum*, diss. XII., quoted by Gibbon.

[2] Cf. the masterly passage in Tert. apol. 28—36.

[3] I may admit that the Manichean edict was always a hideous bugbear to me, until I conjured it up for myself in the *Codex Gregorianus*, and laid it (I hope) for ever. I felt it to be quite contrary to all else that was known of Diocletian; and yet there seemed no way to elude Neander's triumphant question on p. 197 of vol. ii., and Baur's on p. 431. See below.

And in point of fact, even if Diocletian had clung to the Roman state ideal, there was now nothing in Christianity that was contrary to it, for the state had altered its ideal on purpose. The Christian religion, like that of the Jews, had been allowed to establish itself on its own conditions. The cultus of the Prophet of Nazareth had been taken under the protection of the Roman government, and those who injured or interfered with it did so at their peril[1]. Neander himself has very sagaciously pointed out how different a thing it was to assail the Church now, from what it had been in the days of Decius and Valerian. The law of Gallienus had brought her within the magic circle. A harsh zealot like Aurelian had respected it.

The old Roman notion, then, of the politics of religion did not influence Diocletian. But it is said that there were reasons more strictly conscientious, on account of which Diocletian was bound to persecute our faith. He was, we are told, a deeply religious person; or, to put it in a less complimentary light, he was completely abandoned to superstition[2].

The statement contains a great appearance of truth; but it is necessary to make a thorough investigation of the nature of Diocletian's personal religion before we decide what bearing it had upon the persecution. In the first place, there is nothing whatever to shew that Diocletian

[1] As we may see in the account of Aurelian's behaviour to the heretical Patriarch of Antioch.

[2] This is the cause alleged with the greatest distinctness by Dr Bernhardt in his smaller work; see especially pp. 48—62: and apparently his views are not to be altered in the *Geschichte Roms*, to judge from p. 254 of the first instalment. So also Richter, on p. 49 of his *Weströmisches Reich*, where he makes Diocletian quite silly about his superstition. But it seems the stanchest supporter of this view (though he makes Diocletian less superstitious and more orthodox) is Prof. Vogel, whose work (alas!) I only know through the hostile account of it in Wietersheim's *Völkerwanderung*.

was one of the new Platonist school. Had this been the case, he must needs have persecuted, for liberty of conscience was not a part of the philosophical creed. But no one has even attempted to prove that his religion was based, like Julian's, upon the grounds of philosophical truth. Though he was a man of some literary education, he had not the leisure, even if he had the mental fitness, for metaphysical speculation. The man was no theologian. In the second place, Diocletian exhibits no special devotion towards the old state gods of Rome. If he had been an extremely orthodox believer in the divinity of Juno, Neptune, and Vulcan, who (mark this) were still as much state gods as any, he could not have failed to feel an animosity against the Christians; for while to all the rest of the world these gods had died of old age and inaction, the Christians believed in them firmly, and called them devils. But Diocletian, though probably he always treated the regulation deities with a decent respect[1], never discovered any zeal for their service. It is very easy indeed to see that his reverence, on many occasions shewn, for the powers of Jupiter, does not at all imply a devotion to the mythological person of that name[2]. Thirdly, Diocletian was no impulsive enthusiast. Nothing could be further from his prudent and stern self-discipline than the unbridled religious orgies of a Heliogabalus or a Maximinus Daza. His political instincts alone would have been enough to keep him from superstitions of such a kind.

[1] Aur. Vict. Caess. xxxix. 45, *ueterrimae religiones castissime seruatae.*

[2] This is Vogel's especial mistake. He says on p. 29 (quoted by Wietersheim, III. p. 166): *Er führte nun im Namen Jupiters das römisch-griechische Volksheidenthum als eine heidnische Staatskirche zur Herrschaft, und musste consequent alle Religionsformen, welche sich ausschliessend zu ihr verhielten, vertilgen.* Wietersheim goes too far the other way, in making Diocletian take up the notion of a divine vicegerency simply from *political* grounds.

Yet Diocletian's religion was very real. The often quoted marriage edict shews how deeply its moral influences had penetrated him. His assumption of the name of Jovius was not like the assumption of the name Augustus, simply a political trick[1]. He had a firm belief in his own divine election and right to rule[2]. To him his royal robes were a faint typification of "the mantle of the Immortal Zeus[3]." It was under the column and effigy of Jove that Galerius received the purple; and under the same Diocletian himself laid it aside[4]. In the temple of the Capitoline Jove he had obliged Maximian, by an oath, that he would abdicate on the day that he had fixed[5]; and when that day arrived, it was into the hands of the giver, Jove, and not of Hercules, that Herculius rendered up his dignity[6]. In the privacy of Spalatro, Diocles worshipped still the chief of gods to whom his greatness had been due; in all that city-like residence there was no building that more attracted the eye than the octagonal temple of Jupiter[7]. And the few traces of Sun-worship which we find in Diocletian's life, are really only parts of the same cultus. While to more sensual minds the sun's hot beams were the

[1] Though the name of *Herculius* bestowed upon Maximian would certainly suggest that it was mere symbolism, Aurelius Victor (*Caess.* xxxix. 18) singles out this very point to mark the man's religion: *huic postea cultu numinis Herculei cognomentum accessit, uti Valerio Iouium.* The resignation of *Herculius* to *Jupiter* is significant.

[2] I think this is all that is meant by the much talked of *numen* (no longer the mere *genius*) of the Emperor. One would have thought that such an assumption of divine titles (if really so intended) was somewhat irreligious; but Dr Richter makes it part of Diocletian's scrupulous piety. He says: *Er war ein inniger und scrupulöser Verehrer der Götter; er glaubte, die Kaiser hätten ein besonderes Numen im Olymp, und ihre Macht, ihr beabsichtigter fast göttlicher Nimbus auf Erden würde dadurch verstärkt, dass die Unterthanen dieses Numen fleissig anbeteten.*

[3] Malalas, xii. p. 310.

[4] Lact. mort. 19.

[5] Eum. paneg. IX. 15.

[6] Incert. paneg. V. 12.

[7] Gibbon, vol. ii. p. 179; Burckhardt, p. 48.

incentive to a hideous Baalism, to others his brightness and power were "the least debasing representative of the Great Supreme.[1]" The Egyptian Serapis, to whom Diocletian had built a temple in Rome[2], had done much to identify the Sun-god with the power which was adored under the name of Jove. It was to the Sun that Diocletian appealed upon the death of Numerian[3], it was the Sun-god of Miletus that he consulted about the persecution of the Christians. In one delightful glimpse that we obtain of him after he had laid aside the cares of state, we see the naïve pleasure with which he contemplates the colossal bas-relief made to adorn a new temple of the Sun which he had erected in Pannonia[4]. And the only other special cult to which he was addicted, was connected most intimately with the same worship. As soon as the Sirmian sculptors had finished their bas-relief of the Sun-god, Diocletian bad them carve an effigy of Aesculapius[5], destined, most probably, for that chapel of Aesculapius which stood in the palace of Salona, side by side with the temple of Jupiter[6].

[1] Milman *Hist. Chr.* II. 174. Niebuhr (*Rom. Hist.* p. 320, Schmitz), speaking of the Christianity of Philip the Arabian, combats Eckhel's argument drawn from the symbols on the coins, for he says, "the emblems refer only to the god of the sun, whose worship was *mixed up* with Christianity."

[2] Burckhardt, p. 59: but as Mr Burn does not notice this temple, there is perhaps some mistake: — Burckhardt gives no reference.

[3] Dr Bernhardt is in a great strait to reconcile Diocletian's fear of God with the hollowness of this oath: I suppose that I am too: but (1) Aper was the *actual* murderer, (2) Diocletian believed himself *predestined* to kill Aper, (3) men sometimes forget their principles at critical moments.

[4] Passio ss. IV. coron. ch. 1.

[5] Ibid. ch. 4; cf. ch. 9, and Benndorf's archaeological note about the temple of Aesculapius in the Roman Thermae of Diocletian.

[6] Gibbon *l.c.* After a very careful search I can find no instance of Diocletian's personal devotion to any other deities. Other temples built by Diocletian besides these mentioned were, to Isis and to the Nymphs at Rome (Burckhardt *l.c.*), and to *Apollo, Aesculapius,* Saturn and Mars in the Thermae (Benndorf, p. 354); and at Antioch, to Olympian *Zeus, Apollo,* Hecate and

Jupiter, symbolized by the Sun, and Aesculapius—this is an exhaustive list of the forms which the Emperor's special devotion took. The objects of the adoration of Diocletian were, we see, the supreme all-seeing Power, both moral and natural Governor, which had set him to rule and restore the world,—and that wise and gentle hero, the son of Phoebus, who spent his life in healing the diseases of his brother-men, and found his death in raising the dead to life, and yet was received to divine honours by the deity which had exacted his destruction,—the most splendid approximation that polytheism ever made to the doctrine of the Atonement, the Resurrection, and the Ascension. Diocletian's creed was simply that earnest and righteous theism, lacking only conscious definition to make it a monotheism, which we find also in Constantius and others of his best heathen contemporaries. Had it still been possible to think that the Christians were atheists, we should have fancied him likely to persecute them. But the old grounds of this accusation were no more. The Christian Temples were among the public ornaments of the towns. The Priest, the Altar, the Sacrifice—however far from the Gentile conception of the terms—were well known to have a prominent position in our vocabulary. The Emperor was in at least as good a position as any other man, to know that we worship the Supreme Deity, even as he himself did. He was only "not yet a Christian."

When we examine into the grounds on which Diocletian may be called superstitious, we find a good deal that seems to warrant the appellation[1]. He believed very firmly that

Nemesis (Burckhardt, p. 60). These may not mean much, but the two within his own palace certainly express his own devotion.

[1] None of the German writers who have touched upon this subject have

the unseen powers were willing to reveal to men their designs. "He was a pryer into the future," says Victor, "and saw that destiny threatened the state with intestine misfortunes and a great crash[1]." "Perhaps," says Zosimus more cautiously, "he even foresaw the confusion which was to overtake the empire, since he was incessantly engaged in claiming kinship with the divine power[2]." "His cowardice," says the bitter Church historian, "made him pry into things to come[3]." It would be hypercritical to point out, how the aim of the two first of these passages is to sneer at Constantine's reforms, and the aim of the third to make Diocletian contemptible: the thing spoken of was evidently characteristic of the man. We have seen before that his staff of soothsayers was always with him[4]. This lively communication between gods and men, was, he believed, carried on, not only through auguries, but through oracles. When our materials are so scanty we are obliged to refer repeatedly to the same thing:—but we need not here speak again of the embassy to the cave of Branchidae; it is more interesting to observe that his trust in oracles was so well known as to suggest part of the pious tactics of that good saint of Alexandria who was so anxious for the Emperor's

seen, or hinted, any distinction between *Religiosität* and *Aberglauben*.—Lest any should suspect me of being biassed in describing Diocletian's partiality to the faith, I have taken care to set down in these paragraphs every single passage which shews his religious, or superstitious, views.

[1] Aur. Vict. Caess. xxxix. 48: *namque imminentium scrutator, ubi fato intestinas clades et quasi fragorem quendam impendere comperit status Romani.*

[2] Zos. ii. ἴσως γὰρ καὶ προῄδει τὴν καθέξουσαν τὰ πράγματα σύγχυσιν, οἷα καὶ τῷ περὶ τὸ θεῖον ἀεὶ προσκείμενος ἀγχιστείᾳ. I am not at all sure whether I understand the last word, but at any rate I have not *weakened* its force.

[3] Lact. mort. 10: *ut erat pro timore scrutator rerum futurarum.*

[4] Lact. mort. *l.c.* and 11. We may perhaps be allowed to add to the list of Diocletian's superstitions that he believed as firmly as Lactantius or Tertullian in the power of the sign of the Cross, as we may conclude from the story on p. 42.

soul. "Sometimes," he writes to Lucianus, "the librarian will talk of the Divine Writings, which Ptolemy Philadelphus thought it worth while to have translated into our own tongue: sometimes also the Gospel and the Epistles will be quoted, and quoted *as Divine Oracles*[1]." Besides these more recognised sources of secret knowledge, Diocletian is said to have paid great heed to prophecies and omens. Without being very rationalistic we have already suggested an elucidation of the wise woman's saying about Aper[2]: but even with such a clue to guide him to the meaning of the riddle we can hardly doubt that there was that within him which made the words seem to him a supernatural enuntiation of a destiny[3]. There were ample reasons to justify the choice of Maximian and Constantius for the associates of the throne, but it is *possible* that there may have been a further influence in the fact that Herculius' birthday was identical with his friend's;—it is *possible* that Diocletian was so free from jealousy as not to

[1] S. Theonae epist. 7: *diuinas scripturas quas Ptolemaeus Philadelphus in linguam nostram traduci curauit, laudabitur et interdum euangelium apostolusque pro diuinis oraculis.*

[2] See p. 5. There certainly is much truth in this story, however we explain it: (1) Diocletian had related it to Vopiscus' grandfather long before the prophecy was fulfilled; (2) though the prediction of the Druidess was little known (*neque satis uolgare*), *every* body knew Diocletian's remark on having accomplished it (*iam illud notum est atque uolgatum*). At the same time a strong indication that Diocletian did not feel it very religiously is the fact that he jested about it; and the jest itself (*ego semper apros occido, sed alter utitur pulpamento*), used at the death of one or more Emperors, shows what kind of *Apri* he had in view, contradicting Vopiscus' statement (not made on his grandfather's authority) that Diocletian took the prophecy literally. If the saying really was only, "Kill Arrius Aper, and you will be Emperor," Diocletian would see in it a true revelation from heaven of what he was to do; but the mere vulgar belief in fortune-telling would thus entirely disappear; for it will be observed that none of the other cases of this superstition recorded of Diocletian are at all credible.

[3] Vopiscus (*Carin.* 18) certainly expressed Diocletian's own views when he said: *Diocletianum et Maximianum principes di dederunt.*

shrink from Constantius because a Druidess had foretold the future greatness of the house of Claudius[1]. There were other reasons why Galerius should take the name of Maximian: Octavian, as well as Diocletian, was a great believer in the power of names: but it is *possible* that, as Lactantius says, Diocletian partly changed his name for omen's sake, because of the fidelity of Herculius[2]. Nay, though we may be slow to believe, we must not be so dogmatic as positively to deny, a story told by a late and unknown author, that Diocletian's sleep at nights had been for some time troubled by an apparition which imperiously bad him select a certain person—the name is not recorded—for his successor, and that at last the Emperor summoned the fellow to his presence and said, "If it must be so, take your purple and begone: and do not spoil your sovereign's slumbers any more[3]."

This is a complete statement of the authority on which Diocletian is charged with religious superstition. Even if the

[1] Paneg. Genethl. chaps. 1, 2, 7, 19. Diocletian observes days also in Lact. mort. 12. The Claudian prophecy is mentioned by Pollio Claud. Goth. 10 and by Vopiscus Aurel. 44. We are not told that Diocletian laid any stress upon either the coincidence or the prophecy, indeed Pollio does not say that he was aware of the prediction; and yet Burckhardt p. 49 and Bernhardt p. 50 have no hesitation in saying that these were the *sole* grounds on which both Maximian and Constantius were chosen.

[2] Lact. mort. 18.

[3] Fragm. Anon. ap. Müller fragm. hist. graec. vol. IV. 198, quoted by Burckhardt. There is but one other story to make the whole case against Diocletian complete. Malalas xii. p. 309 tells it to explain a spot at Alexandria called "Diocletian's Horse." When Diocletian took that city, he gave orders that so much blood should be shed as that his horse might go knee-deep in it. As he approached the gate, the charger stumbled heavily over a corpse and stained his knees with the gore. Diocletian took this for an omen, and ordered the carnage to be stopped. The grateful Alexandrians raised a statue to the careless beast. The story might all be true except Diocletian's order to shed the blood. I should add that a point is made of a certain nervous fear of lightning of which he is accused on the strength of a forced construction of Eus. Orat. Const. xxv. 2.

greatest possible strength be granted to these last doubtful items,—according to which a most profound statesman took important and wise political steps, not because they were wise, but on account of some trivial coincidence or dream or gipsy prediction,—the scaffolding will not bear the weight which is set upon it. Such superstition was not peculiar to the man, but common to the age, and the age was not at all pronounced against the Christians. And there were not wanting precedents of men upon the imperial throne, who had combined strong religious and superstitious instincts with a favourable attitude towards Christianity. Hadrian, loathsome and hypocritical man as he was,—the Louis XI. of pagan Rome—was a noted devotee of the old Roman and Greek worship, and set great store upon his office of Pontifex[1]. Not only was he careful to be initiated in the Eleusinian and other mysteries[2], but he paid great heed to oracles[3], and had himself learned the dark arts of forecasting the future[4]. And yet we have still preserved to us a most important rescript of Hadrian's, which protects Christianity from popular violence and informal accusations[5]. The Christian philosophers Quadratus and Aristides thought it no bad time to present Apologies to a heathen Emperor[6]. Nay, Hadrian's disposition towards Christianity was so well known, that, whether rightly or wrongly, men used to say that the temples void of idols,

[1] Ael. Spart. Hadr. xxii. 10: *sacra Romana diligentissime curauit, peregrina contempsit: pontificis maximi officium peregit.*

[2] Aur. Vict. Caess. xiv. 4; Ael. Spart. Hadr. xiii. 1, 2.

[3] Ael. Lampr. Heliog. vii. 8. His belief in *omens* may be gathered from Ael. Spart. Hadr. xxvi. 6.

[4] Ael. Spart. Helius iii. 9: *fuisse enim Hadrianum peritum matheseos, Marius Maximus usque adeo demonstrat ut eum dicat cuncta de se scisse, sic ut omnium dierum usque ad horam mortis futuros actus ante perscripserit.*

[5] ap. Eus. hist. eccl. IV. ix.

[6] Eus. hist. eccl. IV. iii. 1, 3.

which he built in various places, were destined by him for the worship of the Saviour[1]. But the excellent Emperor Alexander was in all respects a man more like to Diocletian. He would only wear a robe of office which was kept in the temple of Jupiter; and the praetexta he refused to wear save in his capacity of pontiff[2]. Among his public works was the adornment of the temples of Isis and Serapis[3]. His belief in the powers of the soothsayers was conspicuous and implicit. They were consulted even in such matters as the direction of the road up to the palace[4]. He endowed professorships of soothsaying and also of astrology[5]. He himself was one of the greatest masters of the art[6]. Yet the son of the Mamaea who had conversed with Origen[7], did not content himself with permitting the existence of the Christians[8]. Once when some Christians had taken possession of a piece of open ground, the pastrycooks' company tried to wrest it from them; but Alexander decided that it was better for God to be worshipped there under whatever form, than that it should be surrendered to the mercenary uses of pastrycooks[9]. He was fond of praising the careful way in

[1] Ael. Lampr. Alex. xliii. 6. Neander decides too strongly against the account: it at any rate shows the current opinion about Hadrian. His sarcasms in Vop. Saturn. 8 prove nothing in the case of the man who canonized Antinous.

[2] Ael. Lampr. Alex. xi. 8, 9.

[3] Id. ib. xxxvi. 8.

[4] Ael. Spart. Sev. xxiv. 5.

[5] Ael. Lampr. Alex. xliv. 4.

[6] Id. ib. xxvii. 5: *matheseos peritus et ita quidem ut ex eius iussu mathematici publice proposuerint Romae ac sint professi ut docerent. haruspicinae quoque peritissimus fuit, ornescopus magnus ut et Vascones Hispanorum et Pannoniorum augures uicerit.* This notice of Pannonian augurs is interesting as showing that probably Diocletian's was not a Roman but a native superstition.

[7] Eus. hist. eccl. VI. xxi. 2.

[8] Ael. Lampr. Alex. xxii. 4: *Christianos esse passus est.* This need not mean that they became formally a *religio licita.*

[9] Id. ib. xlix. 6: *cum Christiani quendam locum, qui publicus fuerat, occupas-*

which the Church posted the names of all whom she destined for the Priesthood, so that any, who knew evil of them, might object[1]. He had picked up from some Christians the words of Christ, that we ought to do to others as we would that they should do to us, and had them ever on his lips[2]. And it is so well known, that we need hardly repeat the tale—that Lampridius found in the works of a contemporary of Alexander, a description of the *lararium* in which the pious Emperor said his morning prayers, where were ranged statues of "canonized princes, but only a selection of the best,—and some others of the most holy souls, among whom were Apollonius and Christ, Abraham and Orpheus, and others like them[3]." With examples like these before us, we can hardly think that Diocletian was bound, by such religion and such superstition as can be traced to him, to make a fierce and bloody onslaught on the Church[4].

scnt, contra popinarii dicerent sibi eum deberi, rescripsit melius esse ut quemammodum cumque illic deus colatur quam popinariis dedatur.

[1] Id. ib. xlv. 7: *dicebatque graue esse, cum id Christiani et Iudaei facerent in praedicandis sacerdotibus qui ordinandi sunt, non fieri in prouinciarum rectoribus quibus et fortunae hominum committerentur et capita.*

[2] Id. ib. li. 7: *clamabatque saepius quod a quibusdam siue Iudaeis siue Christianis audierat et tenebat, idque per praeconem, cum aliquem emendaret, dici iubebat quod tibi fieri non uis, alteri ne feceris.*

[3] Id. ib. xxix. 2: *matutinis horis in lararío suo, in quo et diuos principes (sed optimos electos) et animas sanctiores,—in quis Apollonium et, quantum scriptor suorum temporum dicit, Christum Abraham et Orfeum et huiuscemodi ceteros habebat,—rem diuinam faciebat.* Eusebius (hist. eccl. VI. xxviii. 1) testifies to the number of believers belonging to the house or family of Alexander.

[4] Some writers, as Bernhardt p. 10 and Burckhardt p. 331, have dared to hint, that we are to take in a plain and literal sense the contrite confession of Eusebius (hist. eccl. VIII. i) concerning the declension of Christian piety, and that the persecution may be traced to the lofty morality of Diocletian's religion. I shall not be at the pains to point out, as Burckhardt afterwards does, that the sins which the Bishop there acknowledges, were not such as

It seems unreasonable, then, to suppose that Christianity, as a religious persuasion, would find itself in serious conflict either with Diocletian's personal faith, or with his political view of religion. The only real ground on which he can be thought to have leant to the persecution, was the great power of the Church as a corporation[1]. We have already noticed how the Bishops had acquired something of princely state, and with it also something of tyrannical power. Even fifty years before, in the time of Decius, the chief Pastor of the Church in Rome was so great a magnate, that St Cyprian thinks the Emperor would have looked with less suspicion

to attract the notice of a heathen moralist. The old slanders so often refuted in earlier days, were never uttered now (see Eus. IV. vii. 14): and least of all men would the master of St Lucian and St Dorotheus, the husband and the father of Christian Empresses, believe such foolish calumnies.

Hunziker, p. 147, lays some little stress upon the unworldly principles of Christians, which tended to make them bad or useless citizens. But on the contrary we read of many of our brethren in high offices of government. It was only a very few persons who, like Maximilian and Marcellus, used their private judgment to decide what Christianity allowed and so refused to serve in the army: such cases were easy and obvious to deal with. And if here and there a few enthusiasts withdrew from the world, and determined not to marry, it was only so much the worse (or the better) for them: the number of celibates in the state was not now, as in the first century from licentious reasons, and in the fifth from ascetic, a plague and bane.

[1] Strangely enough, however, no one except the great Gibbon—and, I believe, Manso—has made this the chief ground. Gibbon does not commit himself to any particular view. He says (vol. II. p. 466): "Perhaps they represented, that the glorious work of the deliverance of the empire was left imperfect, as long as an independent people was permitted to subsist and multiply in the heart of the provinces. The Christians (it might speciously be alleged) renouncing the gods and the institutions of Rome, had constituted a distinct republic, which might yet be suppressed before it had acquired any military force; but which was already governed by its own laws and magistrates, was possessed of a public treasure, and was intimately connected in all its parts, by the frequent assemblies of the bishops, to whose decrees their numerous and opulent congregations yielded an implicit obedience." Yet he is inclined after all to think that Diocletian rather yielded at last to personal solicitations than gave his intellectual consent to reasoned argument.

on an attempt to establish a rival upon the throne, than on the appointment of a successor to the martyred Fabian[1]. If the excellent Anthimus had been as luxurious and arrogant as his Arian successor under Constantine, we might have wondered more at Diocletian's distaste for his murderous work. A paragraph in Dr Richter's *Western Empire* describes very powerfully this State within the State. "There seemed to be no corner left", he says, "in the three civilised quarters of the earth, into which the autocrat's eye did not, through his organisation, penetrate, and where his glance was not supreme. And yet there was one region where the despot was powerless. In the teeth of the Emperor there had grown up a vast, well-ordered, enthusiastic, influential community, in which a common artisan or shopkeeper, if he were invested with one of its offices, had a power like a king's in the face of the impotent Emperor. As he was politically a subject, the Augustus or the Caesar could indeed trample him underfoot; yet, so long as the man lived an officer of that commonwealth, he laughed to scorn the power of the world; and, when he died, another was there at hand, who stepped up into his place in precisely the same spirit. This power, which had extended its organisation through the provinces of Asia, Africa, and Europe, to the uttermost bounds of the Emperor's own despotic sway,—this perfectly independent State, in the midst of the most imperious of all States,—was the Christian Church[2]."

But the very facts that made Christianity—or rather the corporate Church—such a formidable power to permit, made it also a most formidable power to attack. The

[1] Cypr. epist. lv. 9: *multo patientius et tolerabilius audiret leuari aduersus se aemulum principem quam constitui Romae dei sacerdotem.*

[2] *Weströmische Reich*, p. 46.

Church was not only fitly framed together—the most perfect of organisms,—and filled with an inexhaustible Life; but she had attained outwardly to colossal proportions. There was no telling what the Christians might not do if they were attacked. We need do no more than point again to the edict of Gallienus. That edict was not coaxed from him by the submissive insignificance of the sect: it was wrung from him imperatively by the strength of that Body which all Valerian's persecution had been powerless to conquer. And it was precisely in this capacity,—as a *factio* or society, rather than as a *religio* or cult,—that Gallienus had been forced to submit to its existence[1]. It was precisely in this capacity, as a company with its own bye-laws, that Aurelian, with all his bitter fear and hatred, had acknowledged its inexpugnable position. And assuredly there had been no decay of strength in Diocletian's time. The immeasurable hatred, which our ecclesiastical authors of the time disclose towards the persecuting Emperors, burned as fiercely (doubtless) in the breasts of almost all who professed to venerate the commandment: "Bless them that persecute you." No prudent ruler would venture to rouse against himself so wide and deep an unpopularity. The old Augustus might well feel those fears, which Lactantius makes him utter when the deed was done[2]. It speaks volumes for one of three things,—the perfect grasp of the Emperors upon the administration, or the poor-heartedness of the Christians, or their profound obedience to the saying,

[1] The point of Gallienus' circular letter to the Bishops is the restoration of Church *property:* and Aurelian's judgment was that the Church buildings at Antioch ought to belong to the party recognised by the *Pope and the Italian Bishops.*

[2] Lact. mort. 18: *et minus tutum, quod in tam longo imperio multorum sibi odia quaesisset.*

"Resist not evil",—that we hear so little of mutinies in the army, and risings in the provinces. If the Passion of St Maurice be at all authentic, we have a solitary instance of the one[1]: and the prompt imprisonment of all the Bishops on the occasion of seditious attempts in Syria and Melitene (in which they probably had no hand) shows how keenly Diocletian expected and feared the other[2].

It was not safe to reckon too much upon the fact that the camp of the Christians was sorely divided against itself[3]. Heresies and schisms had split it up, and perhaps still more the less disinterested rivalries of Catholics. But these divisions were rather clerical than lay, and they were rather glaring than deep. When it came to a struggle between the Church and the world the differences vanished, and the Body proved itself to be One. In at any rate one case, a Bishop of the fast vanishing heresy of the Marcionites suffered at the same stake with a Catholic ascetic, and all but atoned for his error, in the eyes of the liberal Eusebius, in that purgatorial flame[4].

[1] As all modern writers are agreed that the Gaulish Bagaudae were *not* Christians, I have not taken the trouble to investigate the matter, though I feel somewhat uneasy on the point.

[2] Eusebius (VIII. vi. 8) implies that the Second Edict was the direct *result* of these commotions. This is manifestly exaggerated: but probably it was more stringently enforced in consequence.

[3] Burckhardt (p. 332) and Bernhardt (p. 11 foll.) who generally hunt in couples—and Keim (in Baur's and Zeller's *Theol. Jahrb.* for 1852)—*suggest* these divisions as the main cause of the persecution. We shall have more to say on the subject when we come to deal with Galerius' edict of toleration: but we may mention here that Burckhardt himself is wise enough to point out how much more politic it would be in the heathen party to foment these lamentable feuds. Hunziker sensibly ignores the suggestion.

[4] Eus. mart. Pal. x. 2: the poor man is too severely dealt with in the phrases *ἐπίσκοπός τις εἶναι δοκῶν*, and *ζήλῳ μέν, ὡς ᾤετο, εὐσεβείας ἀλλ' οὔτι γε τῆς κατ' ἐπίγνωσιν*, and the cruel apodosis *ὅμως δ' οὖν*. An analogous case had occurred in the persecution of Valerian, at Caesarea. Eus. hist. eccl. VII. xii.

Nor could Diocletian hope to gain so much from the approbation of the pagan half of his subjects, as to counterbalance the disaffection of the Christians. It is true that a strange revival was running through paganism, preparatory to its downfall, presenting a close parallel with the Ultramontane revival in modern Europe. It had (in the neoplatonic form) a fascinating attraction for persons of literary taste and gentle birth, coupled with an aspiring but confused intellect: and it had, in the gross forms of magic and of symbol worship (which bore a close relation to neoplatonism), charms for the ignorant poor—especially the women,—inasmuch as it made religion easy by materialising it. And yet how little, after all, the population was embittered against the Church by this revival is proved very clearly by the subsequent history. The proportion of judges (representing the educated classes) whom we find befriending the Christians, is very large. And only one (so far as I know) of the multitude of Acts which we possess—the Acts of St Sabinus—brings in the rabble as the cause of persecution[1]; while the eye-witness of the martyrdoms of Palestine not once (if I mistake not) mentions the crowd as even joining in the work. Those days were in the dim forgotten background of history, when popular rage could hurry magistrates into cruelties towards the Christians[2]. The Gentiles themselves,

[1] And this, we must remember, took place under very peculiar circumstances (see below, p. 212), and in the stronghold of paganism, Rome. Even at Rome itself Maxentius actually stopped the persecution, and (according to Eusebius, hist. eccl. VIII. xiv. 1) made feint to be a Christian, *in order to gain favour with the populace*. In the Acts of St Philip of Heraclea, the people begin to be divided when (not before) they see the punishment going on: but it is expressly stated that the loudest of the persecuting party were Jews.

[2] Dr Richter, without studying the facts, has indulged in a good deal of rhetoric about the "fury of the populace against the atheists."

we are told, in that district, censured Maximin's edict of 308 as low, oppressive, superfluous, and absurd: they thought it too much of a good thing[1]. Nay, at Alexandria, the very home of neoplatonism, the pagans themselves, with almost a modern indignation against intolerance, concealed the Christians in their houses, and sacrificed all rather than betray them[2]. There was not a man in all Alexandria, whose son or daughter, brother or bosom-friend, was not a Christian. It was not likely that they would join very heartily in the government measures against those who were so near and dear to them. There was not a trace of that *social* persecution which had formed so distressing a feature in the circumstances of the Church of France under Marcus.

The fact is that the whole world had altered as much, since the days of Trajan, as the constitution. Christianity was a received religion, and half the world had embraced it. Though many of its doctrines were kept close, its principles were perfectly well known. From those principles it was plain that persecution could never make men surrender it. The method had been tried, systematically and often; and it had failed. It will be shewn presently, that Diocletian was well versed in the history of persecution. The Church

[1] Eus. mart. Pal. IX. 3: *τῶν τε ἀπίστων ἐθνῶν βαρεῖαν τῶν γινομένων καὶ ὡσὰν περιττὴν ἤδη τὴν ἀτοπίαν καταμεμφομένων· προσκορῆ γὰρ καὶ φορτικὰ ταῦτα καὶ αὐτοῖς εἶναι ἐφαίνετο.* The words are extremely vigorous.

[2] S. Athanas. ad sol. uit. ag. p. 853 A (Paris 1627): *ἐγὼ γοῦν ἤκουσα τῶν πατέρων καὶ πιστὸν ἡγοῦμαι τὸν ἐκείνων λόγον, ὅτι τὸ πρῶτον, ὅτε γέγονε καὶ ἐπὶ Μαξιμιανῷ τῷ πάππῳ Κωνσταντίου διωγμός, Ἕλληνες ἔκρυπτον τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ἡμῶν τοὺς Χριστιανοὺς ζητουμένους, καὶ πολλάκις ἀπώλεσαν αὐτοὶ χρήματα δεσμωτηρίων τε ἐπειράσθησαν, ἵνα μόνον τῶν φευγόντων μὴ γένωνται προδόται· ὡς γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς ἐφύλαττον τοὺς προσφεύγοντας καὶ κινδυνεύειν πρὸ αὐτῶν ἐβουλεύοντο.* The Patriarch was himself five years of age at the outbreak of the persecution. —The excessive latitudinarianism of that dialectical city afforded a vast amusement to the Emperor Hadrian: see his letter ap. Vop. Saturn. 8.

might have been "stamped out" (to borrow a word from the history of contemporary Christianity) if earlier Emperors had only sought out all the fanatics and burned them without scruple. But there were too many now. The whole world would be turned upside down[1]. Persecution was an anachronism; and Diocletian was not the man to commit anachronisms. The only plan now for subjugating the vigorous organisation of the Church, was to cajole it (when the opportunity should offer) by some such method as that chosen by Diocletian's subtle pupil, the first Christian Emperor.

Diocletian's own private character and mental constitution, independently of these political and religious considerations, was such as to set the historian on his guard against believing too readily, that he was the author of the hideous plot. Clemency was his favourite virtue[2]. This quality, which nature had implanted in him, was further recommended by his clear views of political expediency[3]. While his stern treatment of the Alexandrians shews that he knew the limit, beyond which mercy becomes weakness and defeats itself by encouraging sedition, even his detractors are forced to sneer at—for they cannot deny—his mildness[4]. However carefully the edict might be worded, a disestablishment of Christianity must sooner or later lead to blood; and Lac-

[1] Lact. mort. 11: *inquietari orbem terrae.* The words are put in Diocletian's mouth.

[2] Jul. Capit. M. Aurel. 19: *saepe dicitis uos uita et clementia tales esse cupere qualis fuit Marcus;* Lact. mort. 11: *hanc moderationem tenere conatus est.* Cf. the rescript in the Codex Gregorianus XIV. 3: *qualitas precum Iulii Antonini clementiam nostram facile commouit;* and the Marriage Edict.

[3] Vop. Num. 15, quoted on p. 5; compare his strictures on Aurelian and Maximian, p. 21, and his clemency to Aristobulus.

[4] Eutr. x. 1. *Diocletiani suspectam prudentiam,* and Lact. mort. 11, quoted above.

tantius paints the historical Diocletian, when he makes the Emperor loathe the prospect[1].

And in this particular case his distaste for bloodshed—and (it may be added) the nervous apprehensiveness of dangers which, in the harsh caricature of the *Mortes*, becomes timidity—were aided by a feeling still deeper and more personal. Diocletian was a man—if not of warm—yet of very strong and true affections. The unbroken love of those with whom he was connected, is as clearly marked in the recorded facts of his life, as in the portrait of him which Vopiscus draws[2]. He was able to extract from the rugged Maximian, all through their long friendship, a veneration and loyalty which could only be maintained by some deep power of attachment within himself. Equally lasting, and equally cordial, was his connexion with the grandfather of Vopiscus,—the common comrade of Maximian and himself, and the confidant of his youthful hopes: and when Diocletian had retired to Salona, he kept the son of his old friend beside him, the confidant of his disappointment and regrets[3]. His love for the clever and beautiful young son of Constantius was far stronger than the ungrateful youth deserved[4]. Can it be thought that the affectionate

[1] Lact. mort. 11: *quam perniciosum esset fundi sanguinem multorum.*

[2] Vop. Num. 13: *amantem suorum.* His bitter foe Aurelius Victor xxxix. 46 gives this statement the direct lie: *Valerio parum honesta in amicos fides erat, discordiarum sane metu; dum enuntiationibus posse agitari quietem consortii putat.* I cannot translate these last clauses, but I can confidently contradict them.

[3] Vop. Num. 14: *auus meus mihi retulit ab ipso Diocletiano compertum*; 15: *Maximiano conscio atque auo meo, cui hoc dictum a Dryade ipse retulerat*; and *ipsum Diocletianum idem auus meus dixisse dicebat, nullam aliam sibi causam cet.*; Id. Aurel. 43: *sed ego a patre meo audiui Diocletianum principem iam priuatum dixisse.*

[4] Eus. uit. Const. I. xii. 2 and II. xix. quoted above. We shall have

Diocletian was willing, of his own accord, to afflict, however lightly, the faith of those devoted and much-trusted servants, who were to him like children and he their father[1]? the faith of that beloved daughter, whose subsequent sorrows and ill-treatment brought the broken-hearted Emperor to his death[2]?

We are at length approaching the end of this tedious yet not unnecessary discussion. But on glancing back over this true view of Diocletian's relation to the Christians, the student finds himself face to face with a very pertinent question. He sees that no antiquarian conservatism, no religious intolerance, can have impelled the Augustus to trouble the believers; while political prudence, natural character, and domestic relations, all drew him in the very opposite direction. And yet Diocletian did become a persecutor. He did give his consent, though a qualified consent, to the desires of Galerius. How came it to pass at last? What account can be given of the old Emperor's bending to the will of his inferior? For twenty years he had been—not tolerating merely—but favouring and flattering the Church[3]:—ten years later on, the same policy was resumed

occasion hereafter to mention the manner in which Constantine requited his benefactor.

[1] Eus. VIII. i. 3, 4; and. vi. 1.: τῆς ἀνωτάτω παρὰ τοῖς δεσπόταις ἠξιωμένοι τιμῆς, γνησίων τε αὐτοῖς διαθέσει τέκνων οὐ λειπόμενοι. Cf. Lact. mort. 15; and specially S. Theon. ep. c. 2: *mandatum principis...amore pariter et timore atque omni cum iocunditate perficite: nihil est enim quod hominem magnis agitationibus fatigatum ita recreat sicut intimi seruitoris conueniens iocunditas et benigna patientia;* and 8: *hilari semper ut diximus uoltu, faceti nonnumquam.*

[2] Lact. mort. 41, 42.

[3] Wietersheim *Völkerwanderung* III. 167 well says, against Vogel's religious theory of the persecution: *Entscheidend ist gerade dessen mehr als achtzehnjähriges Verhalten gegen die Christen, das keineswegs ein passiv indifferentes, sondern geradezu ein begünstigendes war, wie die Berufung von Christen zu den obersten Aemtern seines Hofes, und die Nachsicht gegen seine vom heidnischen Gottesdienste sich*

and consummated in the way that Diocletian, in act if not in word, had suggested. What was it, that caused one of the most consequent and decided of men to suffer so extraordinary an interruption in his own plans?

To us, the riddle has no perfect and satisfactory solution. We can only point out that Diocletian is not the sole instance of a strong-minded man, who has been persuaded in old age to act against a lifelong principle[1];—that all the arguments of false religion and false policy which modern critics have obtruded upon him, and which Diocletian had often before revolved and silenced in his own mind, were now urged upon him afresh with all the energy of Galerius, and all the learned subtlety of Hierocles;—that in an ill

ausschliessende Gemahlin und Tochter beweisen. This has been far too much left out of sight. The persecution was emphatically not what Mr Hunziker thinks,—the crowning point to which Diocletian had been looking forward all his life,—but a sudden revolution and revulsion, the most direct abandonment of all Diocletian's former ways. His long, his positive, his energetic goodwill to the Church—coupled with Constantine's faithful execution of the same policy—must make it quite apparent that the persecution of Diocletian was in violent contrast with that Emperor's own feelings and designs.

[1] In precisely the same way the regenerator of the modern English Church, John Wesley, one of the most self-willed and imperious of men, suffered himself to be dragged into a virtual recantation of one of his strongest principles. Having throughout his life been a most scrupulous and exact defender of Anglican order, in his eighty-second year he was induced against his better judgment, by the vain and ambitious Dr Coke, to perform an action which was virtually the foundation of a schism. See his most valuable Life by his own friend and physician, Dr Whitehead, vol. II. pp. 414—438. On p. 423 that author writes: "When he began the practice of ordaining to the ministry, his brother, Mr Charles, exclaimed,

'Twas age that made the breach,
not he.'

And if we add to this the influence that others had over him in this affair, it is perhaps the best apology that can be made for his conduct." The mental derangement which has been alleged by some authors, as the explanation of Wesley's conduct, is very far less supported by evidence in his case, than in that with which we are now comparing it: consult Mr Urlin's *John Wesley's Place in Church History*, p. 165.

moment he had taken counsel of that which he mistook to be the voice of God, and could not but abide the consequences. Many unknown forces may have combined in this direction. "Though we may suspect, it is not in our power to relate, the secret intrigues of the palace, the private views and resentments, the jealousy of women or eunuchs, and all those trifling but decisive causes which so often influence the fate of empires, and the counsels of the wisest monarchs[1]." But whatever the special arguments may have been which shook the great sovereign's purpose, the story we have related bears upon its face the stamp of truth. It makes a perfect picture;—the aged statesman's long resistance to an useless and impolitic measure, slowly and at last yielding to the fanatical importunity of his heir, who must some day have his will. The old man, wearied out, persuades himself, perhaps, that it is better to undertake the obnoxious work himself, than to leave it to be done, after his abdication or decease, by the Evil Beast. Galerius had now been Caesar more than eleven years:—a far longer time than pleased him[2]:—he felt now (no doubt) that he had a right to have some voice in the direction of affairs of state; and he had had full time to become somewhat free and familiar with his father-in-law. Not that he now shows him any open mark of disrespect: such an exhibition is reserved for the next time of meeting, when he has learned satisfactorily that he possesses some ascendency over the will of Diocletian. That great man, whose nervous anxious temperament is so coarsely characterised by Lactantius when he speaks of it directly, but so exquisitely portrayed

[1] Gibbon, vol. II. p. 466.

[2] Lact. mort. 9: *quousque Caesar?* This was six years before.

in his record of facts[1], began to feel a strange sort of dread—surely no personal fear—as he conversed with this uncanny and uncircumspect barbarian, as though he were face to face with some great unknown danger: it was like the "running that could not be seen of skipping wild beasts."

But among the arguments which Galerius and his conspirators used, there was one which had (no doubt) great weight, and which probably was the turning-point of the whole discussion. Burckhardt and Wietersheim[2] are con-

[1] I dare to repeat what I have said before,—that Lactantius' misunderstanding of his facts is a strong testimony to their authenticity. *We* understand all these *timores* in the light of Diocletian's nervous malady, though Lactantius does not connect them with it, and though Pfarrer Hunziker denies the sickness altogether. I feel it a very weighty ratification of the view which I have put forward, that Niebuhr (*History of Rome*, vol. v. p. 348, Schmitz) accepts Lactantius' statement that Diocletian was instigated to the persecution, in his old age, by Galerius, and treats it as quite contrary to Diocletian's own character. Dean Milman (*Hist. of Christianity*, vol. II. p. 213) ably describes the position:—"The cautious disposition of Diocletian, his deeper insight, perhaps, into the real nature of the struggle which would take place, and, possibly, the latent and depressing influence of the malady which may then have been hanging over him, and which, a short time after, brought him to the brink of the grave; these concurrent motives would induce him to shrink from violent measures; to recommend a more temporising policy; and to consent, with difficult reluctance, to the final committal of the imperial authority in a contest in which the complete submission of the opposite party could only be expected by those who were altogether ignorant of its strength."

[2] Burckhardt p. 333 foll., Wietersheim vol. III. 163, 481. Both authors base their argument mainly on the negative evidence, that no other sufficient cause has been adduced,—with which I heartily agree. On the positive side, Burckhardt presses the doubtful inscription of Clunia (see below, p. 217); magnifies the order of Diocletian concerning the Christians in the army (Lact. mort. 10), confusing it with the action of Veturius, and wrenching it away from its context; and dwells on the risings in the East. The fact that the first edict aims only at *degrading* the Christians seems to him to point in the same direction;—as showing (I suppose) that the ground of the persecution was not simply religious. The strongest point is that the eunuchs of the palace were so terribly tortured: *die Kaiser glaubten offenbar einem Complott auf der Spur zu sein;* and the two

vinced that the entire persecution arose out of the discovery of a definite plot, formed by the brethren against their heathen masters. There is no trace of the actual existence of such a plot; and of all mad and useless projects it would have been the maddest and most useless. But the hostility of Diocletian's advisers undoubtedly invented the project for them[1]. It is unknown what form their calumnies and perjuries assumed. Perhaps they asserted that pastorals and circular letters of the Bishops had been intercepted containing ominous words about the overthrow of Babylon[2]. Perhaps news had been brought to them, that some powerful general or governor in Melitene or Syria had been paying suspicious compliments to the faith which (in those parts) was the popular faith. The special jealousy of Diocletian's son-in-law may have insinuated, that the young Constantine, who was in a state of dangerous favour with the army, had been seen engaged in deep and secret conversations with the Christian eunuchs. Or Galerius may have worked upon the imagination of the Augustus, by representing that, though the lenient Diocletian might be personally safe, his own renowned dislike for the enemies

conflagrations. The author also hints at the conspiracy with Constantine; and (of all extraordinary things) twists poor Bishop Theonas' letter into the same design! It will be observed how these suggestions have been utilised more satisfactorily in the text. Wietersheim, who is much more moderate, brings nothing new to bear upon the point, save that from Lact. mort. 15 *ad init.* he thinks the Christians had been plowing with Diocletian's heifer. If he had not decided against Burckhardt's use of Theonas' epistle, he might have found some support in it; for I believe the passage in the eighth chapter, beginning *si ad Augustam accesserit princeps*, to be a warning to the Christian eunuchs not to display too openly their familiarity with the Empress who was their sister in the faith.

[1] It was at any rate brought forward on the occasion of the fire.

[2] Inscr. Clun.: *rempublicam euertebant.*

of the gods had marked him out for a special vengeance[1]. Possibly, even, they may have stung Jovius to the quick by a covert hint that he was falling a prey to the masterly proselytising powers of his major-domo[2].

Certain it is, that, in the end, the reluctant but enfeebled Emperor gave way, partly overwearied, partly convinced. Many years afterwards the great recluse was reviewing, to the father of Vopiscus, his experiences of government. There was nothing, he said, so difficult as to govern well. "A little cabal of four or five"—such were his words—"are apt to get together, and lay their heads together to deceive their sovereign. They speak what is plausible enough. The Emperor, immured in his own palace, is ignorant of the true state of the case. He knows so much as they are pleased to tell him, and (perforce) no more." Again and again the old man insisted:—"No matter how well disposed, how discriminating,—the best of Emperors is *sold*[3]." There is but one recorded occasion in Diocletian's life, to which this bitter reminiscence can refer. It is the occasion of the persecution[4].

[1] Lact. mort. 14: *contestans fugere se ne uiuus arderet.*

[2] Theon. ep. 1: *non ergo, mi Luciane, te iactari aut puto aut uolo, quod multi ex palatio per te ad agnitionem ueritatis peruenerunt.*

[3] Vop. Aurel. xliii. 2: *sed ego a patre meo audiui Diocletianum principem iam priuatum dixisse nihil esse difficilius quam bene imperare. colligunt se quattuor uel quinque atque unum consilium ad decipiendum imperatorem capiunt: dicunt, quod probandum sit: imperator, qui domi clausus est, uera non nouit. cogitur hoc tantum scire quod illi locuntur: facit iudices quos fieri non oportet: amouet a republica quos decebat optinere. quid multa? ut Diocletianus ipse dicebat, bonus cautus optimus uenditur imperator. haec Diocletiani uerba sunt.*

[4] A few more scruples of Mr Hunziker and Dr Bernhardt are, I think, not too big to pass the sieve and fall into a foot-note.

(1) "Could Galerius have come to Nicomedia for the whole winter incidentally, or unbidden? To have come *unbidden*, is inconceivable, according to

the subordination of Diocletian's Caesars: *incidentally*,—a living together of the Augustus and his Caesar for any length of time, without special reasons, would be an isolated case in the reign of Diocletian" (Hunziker p. 157).

But perhaps Galerius had been invited for some other business, or had asked leave to come and consult on this very topic: and of course he would stay till it was settled.

(2) "Diocletian's relation to his colleagues was of such a kind as to preclude the possibility of such an influence as Lactantius speaks of" (Bernhardt p. 26; cf. Burckhardt p. 329).

To this (as well as to a great deal else which we find brought forward in these discussions) we can but reply that there is too much of what Mr Arnold calls *rigour and vigour* in these theories of the *Herrscheridee*, *Staatsidee*, and so on.

(3) A much more important question:—"Must not Diocletian have secured the assent of his co-Augustus before beginning the persecution?" (Hunziker p. 157).

Perhaps Galerius had already secured it, in order to strengthen his case with Diocletian. Or they may have sent and learned his views in the course of their long deliberation. Or they may easily have taken it for granted that he would approve of any proposal that was cruel. Or perhaps Maximian may have spoken wistfully about it on the occasion of the triumph the year before.

CHAPTER IV.

DIOCLETIAN'S TWO EDICTS OF PERSECUTION.

οὐδέ τις ἀνθρώπων ἐργάζεται ἐν φρεσὶν εἰδὼς
ἐς τέλος εἴτ' ἀγαθὸν γίγνεται εἴτε κακόν·
πολλάκι γὰρ δοκέων θήσειν κακὸν ἐσθλὸν ἔθηκεν,
καί τε δοκῶν θήσειν ἐσθλὸν ἔθηκε κακόν.
οὐδέ τῳ ἀνθρώπων παραγίγνεται ὅσσ' ἐθέλῃσιν,
ἴσχει γὰρ χαλεπῆς πείρατ' ἀμηχανίης·
ἄνθρωποι δὲ μάταια νομίζομεν εἰδότες οὐδέν·
θεοὶ δὲ κατὰ σφέτερον πάντα τελοῦσι νόον.

THEOGNIS.

BIGOTRY and violence, then, had at last triumphed over statecraft and old age. Diocletian had weighed the dangers of an attack upon us, against those of a quarrel with the Beast, and chose the former. So long as he himself was in power, he could moderate a persecution: but he never could be certain of the issue, if the hot-headed Galerius took a deadly grudge. All that now remained was to fix the day, and to frame the edict. With bitter irony the two princes agreed upon the 23rd of February, the cheerful festival of the god Terminus,—Galerius, designing to indicate the extermination of our deathless creed,—Diocletian, riddling grimly that the last day of his Golden Age was come.

In the dim dawn of this auspicious day, the Prefect of the Praetorium of the East, the highest subject of the realm, presented himself at the door of the Cathedral Church of Nicomedia, attended by a train of officers military and civil,—commandants of the different garrisons around, tribunes of the various legions, and masters of the exchequer ready to gather into the fiscus whatever treasure might be found[1]. The portals were not yet open, so they broke them in. Search was made for the effigy of the Deity, partly that it might be publicly destroyed, partly to strip it of its jewels[2]. But the only objects of veneration to be found were the Bibles and Missals, which the Readers, in their security, had left as usual in the building. These they burnt, and proceeded to loot and ransack the rest of the Church. The two Emperors sat watching the scene from the roof of the palace. It was observed that they were discussing some question with regard to the fate of the proud fane, and found it hard to reach an agreement[3]. But at length the order went forth for its destruction. The

[1] Lact. mort. 12: *praefectus cum ducibus et tribunis et rationalibus*. Ducange (s. v. *dux*): *sub Constantino M., qui στρατηγοῦ ἐν ἑκάστῳ τόπῳ τάξιν ἐπεῖχε, inquit Zosimus lib.* 2. The word *rationalis* (καθολικός) is the later name for a *procurator*.

[2] Lactantius' words *quaeritur dei simulacrum* seem intended sarcastically, and Dr Milner, in his pious and amiable history, is very indignant with the officers for thinking to find such a thing. And yet there must have been some such ornaments occasionally, at any rate in the more material West, for only two years later the Council of Elvira (305) denounced them. Pagans must have known pretty well what the inside of a Church was like; indeed it would raise a curious question how they were to be kept out. In the course of the century they were expressly permitted even to assist at the Mass of the catechumens, —in company with Jews and persons possessed with devils (Conc. IV. Carth. can. 84).

[3] Lactantius says the question was, whether it should be burnt, or destroyed otherwise. As it was in a quarter where there were many other fine buildings which might catch fire, this can hardly have been the cause of the debate.

Jovian guards were marched, in fighting order, to the spot, with axes and hammers; and in a few hours had defiled that high dwellingplace, even to the ground[1].

This was the first act of the persecution. In what an agonised sickening suspense the Christians of the metropolis, and Lactantius among them, must have waited to know what was to follow this unexplained and ominous attack. With what sinking of heart those faithful servants in the palace must have set themselves to do their work, for the glory of God, as Bishop Theonas had bidden them. Was it come to this? After twenty years of affectionate intercourse had their master turned into a Decius? It was not till the next day (for some cause or another[2]) that the elucidation came. The Imperial Edict realised their worst fears. Christianity was no longer a possible religion.

I. All Churches were to be instantly levelled with their foundations.

II. All copies of the Sacred Books were to be committed to the flames.

III. (1) All Christian men who held any official position, were (not only to be stripped of their dignities, but) to be reduced to the condition of those who had no civil rights whatever;—to whom consequently torture (illegal for citizens) might be applied;—who might be sued at law, assaulted, plundered, have their wives defiled, without the barest possibility of legal defence or redress.

(2) All Christian men who were not state officers, but lived

[1] *templum illud editissimum paucis horis solo adaequarunt.*

[2] Perhaps Diocletian wanted to give them warning what was in the air, that they might have time to make their precautions, before they became legally liable to punishment.

quietly at home in households of their own, and all who were free servants either in the palace, or in other great houses, were to lose (not only, like the former class, all their rights as citizens, but) even the innate right of freedom itself, and to submit without a murmur to the dictates of a slave-owner[1].

Such were the terms in which Diocletian announced his changed attitude towards the Church. Alas, neither of our historians has preserved to us a copy of the preamble. Are we to suppose that they were so engrossed with the edict's tremendous consequences, as to pay little heed to its alleged antecedents? Or are we to suppose—for they generally give the edicts *in extenso*—that Diocletian felt no great concern to display to the world the reasons, which he himself saw to be so little cogent, and preferred to state his conclusions only, in the curtest, most businesslike form[2]? The question may at least be asked. But whatever the preamble may have resembled, and whose hand soever drew it up, the provisions of the new law can owe their origin to none but the great Emperor. His crafty insight and foresight are perspicuous throughout the whole, as well as his careful moderation.

[1] Lact. mort. 13; Eus. hist. eccl. VIII. ii. 4; and mart. Pal. *i. l.* I banish into my Appendix the dry verification of the details of the edict,—which have puzzled everybody from Ruffinus downwards.

[2] This is but a guess of my own, yet I admit I am inclined to it. Lactantius gives us full edicts in chaps. 34 and 48; and Eus. in VIII. 17; IX. 1, 7, 9, 10; X. 5, etc. It cannot be that they were ashamed to state the grounds alleged, for Lactantius speaks of the reasons for the persecution in the palace, and Eusebius of the reasons for the imprisonment of the Bishops. Yet even if Diocletian did put forth a preamble, it would probably not contain his own view, but the representations to which for one cause or another he had been compelled to defer. It tells *against* my guess that all the documents above referred to are documents of toleration, not of persecution.

I. The clause which stood first in the edict was both new and old. The principle which dictated it was as old as the days of Pliny. It was a commonplace of such documents to forbid all conventicles. This was so well understood as the first thought in a persecution of the Christians, that Dionysius of Alexandria tells of a prefect who omitted as superfluous to order him not to hold meetings, though the edict under which Dionysius was arraigned laid great stress upon the point: the judge desired to strike more at the root, and ordered the Patriarch to cease to be a Christian. He nevertheless took care to banish him to a part of the country where he might have no opportunity of gathering an assembly[1]. And naturally so. For an assembly of the brethren was not merely a fortuitous rencontre of persons, as spectators of a religious ceremony. The heathens knew that they administered to each other at such times a *sacramentum*, which bound them, man to man, in bonds stronger than of iron. The very name, by which such congregations went, connoted deliberations for the common weal like those which had been held on the Athenian Pnyx. Of small use it would have been to proscribe the faith and yet suffer the excitable Christians to meet together and listen to the fiery declamations of their Bishops.

But though this old and obvious thought lay underneath the first clause, as a thing unnecessary to mention, the form

[1] apud Eus. hist. eccl. VII. xi. 3, *οὐκ εἶπέ μοι προηγουμένως· μὴ σύναγε· περιττὸν γὰρ ἦν αὐτῷ τοῦτο καὶ τὸ τελευταῖον ἐπὶ τὸ πρῶτον ἀνατρέχοντι.* The prefect in question was afterwards (for a short time) the Emperor Aemilian. The crushing of the assemblies is seen to be the reason of the destruction of the Churches, not only from the incidental notice in the Acts of St Philip (*nusquam colligere*), but from the express statement of Maximian, in his edict ap. Eus. hist. eccl. IX. x. 8: *τὰς συνόδους τῶν χριστιανῶν ἐξῃρῆσθαι.*

was new. The ecclesiastical buildings had never before been honoured with the notice of an imperial edict. From their increased size and splendour they had acquired a novel importance. Unless the Christians should be bold enough (as they were at Heraclea, the capital of Thrace) to meet out of doors in the porticoes of their basilicas, they would find no place which would contain such vast multitudes, as had been wont to gather in the Churches. And not only would the conventicles be stopped, or rendered less dangerous. The pride of the great corporation would be humbled by the loss. Such of the heathens as took any interest in the persecution would be gratified by their humiliation. For these sumptuous temples, of which there were more than forty in the city of Rome alone[1], were the ever visible proof of the overwhelming power of Christianity. An idolatrous religion knows of nothing but externals[2]: and the pagans might almost fancy, when the Churches were pulled down, that the Catholic religion itself was at an end[3].

II. But the second main division of the edict was entirely new. Nothing of the sort had ever before been dreamt of[4]. Not only were the Christians to have no holy buildings

[1] Optat. Milev. ii. p. 59 (Paris 1679): *non enim grex aut populus appellandi fuerant pauci, qui, inter quadraginta et quod excurrit basilicas, locum ubi colligerent non habebant!* Milman (*Hist. Christianity*, vol. II. p. 210 note) supposes that this implies a falling off from the number in the time of Decius: but Optatus only speaks of *basilical* Churches.

[2] See the magnificent answer of St Philip of Heraclea, below, p. 178.

[3] We find from comparison of Maximin's edict in Eus. hist. eccl. IX. x. 11, that the Churches, and the ground on which they were built, were (by the edict) to become the property of the Emperor,—were to be *confiscated*. All other Church property had the same fate: but apparently the Emperors gave away a good deal to different towns, and to private persons, or sold it. The proceeding in many ways resembles King Henry's and King Edward's treatment of the English Church property.

[4] That is to say, in Roman persecu-

for their religious gatherings, but supposing they should contrive, in spite of these precautions, to assemble, it was determined that the assemblies henceforth should lack that which had been hitherto their staple and their core. All sacred writings, of whatever kind, were to be burnt, by diligent search. There would henceforth be no Bibles from which the lessons were read on Sundays, no service-books with which the Priests might celebrate the holy mysteries[1]. The demolition of the fabrics put an end to the Church's public prominence: if only all the books were destroyed along with the other *ministeria* of the sanctuary, the Church's public worship,—her public Offices,—would be at a standstill too. Without her public functions, which had dared to borrow their name from the political *liturgies* of the old Greek constitutions, it might well be thought that the whole life of this extraordinary *factio* would cease. This clever thrust was evidently the work of one who had studied the exoteric phenomena of our faith with an intelligent ignorance. Of any distinction between Bible and Prayer-book, such as is familiar with us, he had never heard. Whether the Divine Oracles, the common name in those days for the holy Scriptures, were to us something after the fashion of pagan oracles or Sibylline books, in what way we consulted them or learnt from them, all this was a mystery to the author of the edict. He had not thought of the use of Holy Writ in the secret life of Christian souls. But he was a keen

tions. Canon Robertson points out the resemblance to the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes: see I. Macc. i. 56, 57.

[1] That it was chiefly as *ministeria* that they were to be delivered up seems clearly implied by the close connexion in which they appear with the holy vessels in the Passion of St Philip, and also in the *Gesta apud Zenophilum* appended to St Austin's works against the Donatists, or to St Optatus.

enough observer to have found that, somehow or other, a literature was mixed up with the Church's life. Doubtless it was the *liturgical* use of books that had evoked this section of the edict. And yet though the blow was blindly aimed, the powers of hell directed the hand that struck it, knowing well enough where the vitals lay. "Ils étaient bien guidés," says a French evangelical writer, in telling how the soldiers at Nicomedia looked for an idol, and found but the Scriptures, "ils étaient bien guidés par l'instinct de la haine: la Parole divine n'était elle pas le vrai fondement de l'Église[1]?"

Or was it really an open-eyed attack upon the Christian faith? Hierocles, who had been a member of the privy council which passed the persecution, knew the Scriptures by heart, like any Christian. He had proved them from internal evidence to be fictions and forgeries, the work of crafty but uneducated deceivers. He had shown that every page was full of the grossest self-contradictions. They were, therefore, utterly opposed to that simple and majestic Truth for which he felt so noble a devotion. Had he urged upon Diocletian, that such monstrous deceptions ought not to be tolerated? that in spite of their palpable fraudulence and falsehood, they had gained a tremendous power over the hearts of Christians, and were constantly successful in adding new converts to the Church? Did he plead that it was the duty of princes, of those, especially, who acknowledged Jove as the bestower of their majesty, to befriend truth and to crush error? Did he venture to recall to Diocletian's mind how, after the reduction of Alexandria, he had made a point of collecting all the books of alchemy

[1] M. de Pressensé, *Histoire des trois premiers siècles*, vol. I. p. 288.

(which had become popular in that city) and had consigned them to the fire, in the righteous purpose of delivering the Egyptians from these vain and impious pursuits[1]? We are bound to take the author of the *Philalethes* at his word, and believe that he was seriously anxious for the truth. To destroy the writings of opponents, need not necessarily argue a dishonest, or even timorous faith. But, even at that date, there were men who could point out that such methods argue a shortsighted faith. Arnobius speaks with remarkable freedom on the point. After showing that Cicero condemns the common anthropomorphic beliefs as strongly as he does himself, he pursues: "I know that there are not a few who shrink and flee from his books upon theology—who will not for a moment lend their ears to arguments which refute what is prejudiced in their own opinions. I hear others going about with indignant whispers and saying that there ought to be an act of the senate passed, for the annihilation of these writings which corroborate the Christian religion, and overpower antient authority. No no. If you believe that you have any well seasoned proofs to adduce concerning your gods, convince Cicero of his mistake; confute him; rebut him; show that what he says is inconsiderate and irreverent. For to spirit away a literature, and to wish to suppress the reading of what has been once published, this is not to defend the gods, but to show dread of the investigation of truth[2]."

[1] Gibbon vol. II. p. 137.

[2] Arn. iii. 7, Reifferscheid: *nam intercipere scripta et publicam uelle submergere lectionem, non est deos defendere sed ueritatis testificationem timere.* See also the remarkable passages in iv. 18 and 36.

But the question of truth and falsehood, though it might influence some of the councillors, was not what moved Diocletian. With him it was entirely a question of politics, not of philosophy or of religion. The destruction of all that outwardly embodied Christianity was the object he had in view, the breaking down of that powerful organisation, which (they told him) was conspiring to overthrow the state. But it is quite possible that one so keen-sighted as he was had, even in the burning of the books, an intention that went further even than the consummation of what was implied in the fall of the buildings. Diocletian doubtless knew that there existed divisions among his Christian subjects. He had read how one of his predecessors upon the throne had been called in to decide in an angry dispute between two contending parties of them. If a believing servant had been set over the library by this time, it could easily be imagined that the Emperor might ask him how the difference, which Aurelian settled, had arisen: the servant would tell him that it arose from differing interpretations of the Scriptures. But there is no need of the help of much imagination:—we may be sure that the observant Augustus knew that the Scriptures were the repertories of Christian doctrine. It is perfectly conceivable that he hoped, by destroying this source of doctrine, to break the great society into fractions, which might be pitted against each other[1]. At any rate this thought, that the government might profit by the mutual hatred of Christian sects, was familiar to later princes. And if this were Diocletian's design, it was fulfilled,—though in the form of schism, not of heresy. The Word of God

[1] This thought was suggested by Burckhardt p. 340.

indeed endured, as it will endure for ever; but over the very preservation of it in the days of persecution, was stirred the fiercest and bloodiest war between fellow-Christians in all the Church's history, until the time came when Christian men assumed the place of Diocletian, and massacred their brethren for refusing to be Traditors. This kind of persecution, which dissolved the confederacy of the Catholics, while it left their lives and persons safe, could hardly be distasteful to the cautious old Emperor. And it was worthy of his genius. It was far the shrewdest thing that had ever yet been done to vex the Church. There are only two things in that century (at any rate) that can be compared with it:—Maximin's forgery of the Acts of Pilate, and (the work of an Emperor who was once a Clergyman) Julian's prohibition of Church schools[1].

III. And now we come to a really most remarkable and important fact, and one which, though very apparent, has never before been pointed out. When we examine that division of the First Edict of Diocletian, which concerns the persons of the Christians, we find that it is closely modelled upon the edict issued, in the year 258, by the Emperor Valerian. That is to say (the fact is extremely significant) with regard to the civil status of Christianity, the new decree only repealed the happy enactments of Gallienus, and returned to the state of the law which that prince's father had bequeathed to him[2].

[1] See the eloquent outburst in the midst of Neander's cold clear criticism, vol. I. p. 203. For an example of the way in which all things work together for the Church's good, see Dr Westcott's *Canon* p. 407 foll. (ed. 1875), where the author shows the effect which the persecution and the schism had in making more conscious the difference between the 'Scriptures of the Law' and uncanonical books.

[2] I repeat that this, so far as I know,

In order to appreciate the full meaning of this striking phenomenon, we only need to glance at the three great moments in the history of persecution. Neander has rightly indicated that the first of these is the famous rescript of Trajan to Pliny[1]. Until that time, it had been tacitly assumed that Christianity was illegal: but Trajan, perhaps without being fully conscious of the fearful significance of his act, made it illegal by an express declaration. His letter was intended to be an act of mercy, for he designed to put a stop to the informal irregular attacks which were so distressing to the Christians, and forbad them to be sought for. But the real effect of his decision was to awaken the consciousness that Christianity was legally a crime: no judge thenceforth could refuse (like Gallio) to hear a case or dare to acquit a person against whom this heinous charge was proved. The credit of indicating the second great moment belongs to one in whom such criticisms are rare, to Tillemont[2]. Between Trajan's time and Decius' time, that is to say under Marcus, Severus, and Maximinus, the persecutions, however fierce, had only risen out of local causes, and had not proceeded directly from the Emperors, but had merely received their sanction or encouragement. But the persecution of Decius was not a concession to popular clamour, nor was it local. It was instituted by imperial proclamations publicly posted in every town in the empire. The avowed object was the

has never been noticed before: every reader will feel at once its immense importance.

[1] Neander vol. I. p. 137.

[2] Tillemont vol. VIII. 130. The *Edict of Decius*, published in 1664, is undoubtedly a forgery.—Since writing the above, I find that Baur (*Christenthum der drei ersten Jahrhunderte* p. 428) has expressed himself on the persecution of Decius in almost the same terms as I have used.

entire and clean eradication of our faith. It was the first unhesitating recognition by old conservative Rome that the Church was her deadliest foe. And the third and greatest moment of all was Valerian's edict.

Valerian's edict, the terms of which are preserved to us in the last letter but one of its most distinguished victim, Cyprian, was the first enactment which defined the profession of Christianity as a statutable offence by positive penalties. Till the date of its issue, the persecutions, however horrible, had been desultory and ill defined. Even the tremendous effort of Decius had been but an assault—a spasmodic attempt to kill the Church at a blow. All that could be said of Christianity in Tertullian's time was, *Non licet esse uos*[1]. Believers by Trajan's order, if they were stiffnecked, were "to be punished," but at the discretion of the magistrates. Trajan distinctly renounced as hopeless any attempt at universal systematic legislation[2]. Valerian's decree therefore is (what even Neander fails to notice) the great epoch in the history of Roman persecutions. By Valerian's statute the penalties of Christianity were codified in an elaborate and invariable table. That stern and thoughtful Emperor determined not only to make a strenuous push on the instant, but to lay down the law for posterity. His action was prospective, as well as retrospective. Christianity was to be regularly cropped down, wherever and whenever it began to show. All illustrious persons, senators and Roman knights, were to forfeit their rank and even the right of possessing property: that is to say, they

[1] Tert. apol. 4.

[2] Plin. ep. x. 98: *neque enim in uniuersum aliquid, quod quasi certam formam habeat, constitui potest: conquirendi non sunt: si deferantur et arguantur, puniendi sunt.*

were rendered *infames.* If after this degradation they persevered in their religion, they were to die. Ladies of the same rank (a more shocking proviso still) were to suffer the same spoliation, and go penniless into exile. Free *Caesariani,* or members of the imperial household, if they professed the faith, nay, if they had ever done so in former days (so unforgiving was the persecution) lost their freedom, became chattels of the Emperor's private treasury, and were distributed in chained gangs to work on the Emperor's domains[1].

Now, here we have the third section of Diocletian's First Edict almost word for word. There is the same distinction between dignified personages and private folks. There is the same scale of penalties in the case of each. Either class, both under Valerian and under Diocletian, falls through two grades, illustrious men being deprived not only of rank, but of citizenship, persons of humbler position, not only of citizenship, but of liberty.

When, then, this great statesman is at last, with extreme reluctance, compelled to an unwise struggle with the Church, he is resolved at least to follow a legal precedent. He plans

[1] S. Cypr. ep. lxxx, Hartel: *quae autem sunt in uero ita se habent, rescripsisse Valerianum ad senatum* (that is, the curia of Carthage) *ut episcopi et presbyteri et diacones in continenti animaduertantur, senatores uero et egregii uiri et equites Romani dignitate amissa etiam bonis spolientur et, si ademptis facultatibus christiani* [*esse*] *perseuerauerint, capite quoque multentur, matronae ademptis bonis in exilium relegentur, Caesariani autem quicumque uel prius confessi fuerant uel nunc confessi fuerint confiscentur et uincti in Caesarianas possessiones descripti mittantur. subiecit etiam Valerianus imperator orationi suae exemplum litterarum quas ad praesides prouinciarum de nobis fecit: quas litteras cotidie speramus uenire:.....sed et huic persecutioni cotidie insistunt praefecti in urbe, ut si qui sibi oblati fuerint animaduertantur et bona eorum fisco uindicentur.* I quote a little further than is necessary in order to show what became of the property of attainted persons. In both cases it passed to the crown.

no novel mode of warfare. He contents himself with rescinding the decrees which had tolerated Christianity. But mark;—in making Christianity once more a *religio non licita* he does not leave the position of the Christians vague and undefined. He takes his stand upon the ground prepared by the good sense and ability of one of his best predecessors. These inoffensive creatures are not to be exposed to the tender mercies of provincial governors to be done with as they list; they are to be protected by being treated, as Valerian treated them, on a known and intelligible system. Once more, Diocletian's design is not to punish men for being Christians already. He intends rather to deter men from joining the *factio* in the future, by making membership in the *factio* entail the loss of all the privileges and honours of a citizen. Let it be well observed (for otherwise Diocletian's persecution cannot possibly be understood) that we have nothing here of the nature of an onslaught. The Churches, with all that pertains to the public meetings, are abolished; and Churchmanship is made to involve a civil degradation; and that is positively all.

How very peculiar in this respect was the nature of Diocletian's persecution will be further seen from one more observation. There can be no doubt that Diocletian had Valerian's edict before him when he penned his own. But the points in which he followed his model are (as is generally the case with great men) less instructive than the points in which he varied. First of all, the husband of Prisca omitted entirely the cruel clause which related to the ladies[1]. Secondly, the manifest inequality of Vale-

[1] In the very touching Acts of SS. Nicander and Marcian (Ruinart p. 484), which suit this period better than any other, the wife of one of the soldiers

rian's special proviso against the members of his own household was removed. It had been based on a want of logical principle. If the Church was to be thoroughly discouraged, the end could not be gained by merely visiting the great men and the Caesarians: the scope of the clause must needs be extended to all that influential middle-class which constituted the bulk of the society. May we not also be allowed to think, that the kind-hearted Emperor was loth to signal out for a grievous punishment the staff of domestic retainers, who had been his familiar and attached attendants? The plan which Diocletian adopted was both more logical, and less invidious. But a more notable circumstance is the new meaning which this comparison of Valerian's law infuses into the words of Lactantius, that Diocletian "attempted to preserve such moderation, as to order no blood to be shed in the transactions". Valerian had particularly ordered the shedding of blood, in case the Christian nobles persisted in their obstinacy. Diocletian saw that for all political purposes the degradation was quite sufficient. One other passage in the document which lay before the Emperor, was clean cut out in his new edition. It was a passage which we have as yet not mentioned,—though truly a passage of some little interest. It represents to us the whole contrast between Diocletian's original idea of the persecution, and the ideas which other Roman sovereigns had entertained, that he made no allusion whatsoever to that clause in which Valerian had commanded, that every Clergyman who could be caught,—whether Bishop, Priest, or

asks whether the orders under which her husband is to die, affect her also. The gentle and kindly Praeses answers that he has certainly not received any directions of the sort: *de mulieribus quidem hoc mihi minime est iniunctum.*

Deacon,—should be executed at a moment's notice, on the spot: *in continenti animaduertantur.*

Such then, was the mild first edict issued under Diocletian against the faith. Amidst all the panic and consternation of the Church of Nicomedia, there was at least one spirit undaunted. A certain gentleman of that city—according to the story that Eusebius knew, one who had held some of the most distinguished offices of state[1]—with a faulty but pardonable indignation, strode to the place where the proclamation was exhibited, tore the placard from the wall, and rent it in pieces. The Nicomedians had not forgotten the lofty announcements that had been made but lately at the time of the triumph. "Look here", cried the Christian with bitter laughter: "more triumphs over the Goths and the Sarmatians!" He was immediately arrested. He had deserved his fate, and he bore it bravely. He was burnt, or fairly roasted, says Lactantius, for defiant high treason[2].

But this edict was not nearly strong enough to content Galerius. The thirst of his fanatical zeal was not to be slaked by the blood of a few casual victims, who, like this spirited gentleman at Nicomedia, happened to add treason to Christianity. He longed for the reinforcement of Valerian's law complete, with its wholesale destruction. This

[1] Eus. hist. eccl. VIII. v. 1. If this were the case he would hardly be anonymous:—as he really is, for though most of the old martyrologies call him John, there is a very grave doubt whether this gentleman of Nicomedia was not St George, our own patron Saint.

[2] Lact. mort. 13: *legitime coctus*. Lactantius proves his superior good sense by censuring the deed, though, as an eyewitness, he might reasonably have been carried away by his enthusiasm. Eusebius' admiration knows no bounds, and gives Gibbon (vol. ii. p. 470) a hold which he uses not sparingly. It will be observed that St George—or John—did not die as a martyr of the persecution.

expurgated, emasculated edition of it gave no encouragement to the detection and spying out of Christians. Galerius did not see the good of burning the Bibles: he wanted to burn the men. And as luck would have it, a circumstance took place which stirred Diocletian also to severer measures.

While he was incessantly pestering the old man, to induce him to take further steps, suddenly part of the palace, which was vast enough to accommodate two whole courts, was found to be in flames. The origin of the fire was a mystery at the time, and we may suppose will ever be so. Constantine, who was himself living with Diocletian when it occurred, describes the fire long years after as a divine judgment, and caused by lightning[1]. Lactantius, without the slightest hesitation, asserts that it was a neatly calculated plan of the Caesar's making: and it must be owned that his case is a good one[2]. But of course the whole weight of suspicion now fell upon the Christians. The palace was full of them; and they might now at any moment be

[1] Orat. ad sanct. coet. XXV. 2: λαλεῖ Νικομήδεια, οὐ σιωπῶσι δὲ καὶ οἱ ἱστορήσαντες, ὧν καὶ αὐτὸς ὢν τυγχάνω; ἐδηοῦτο μέντοι τὰ βασίλεια καὶ ὁ οἶκος αὐτοῦ ἐπινεμομένου σκηπτοῦ νεμομένης τε οὐρανίας φλογός. Eusebius himself says he does not know how it arose, hist. eccl. VIII. vi. 6: οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως ἐν τοῖς κατὰ τὴν Νικομήδειαν βασιλείοις πυρκαιᾶς ἐν αὐταῖς δὴ ταῖς ἡμέραις ἀφθείσης ἦν καθ' ὑτόνοιαν ψευδῆ πρὸς τῶν ἡμετέρων ἐπιχειρηθῆναι λόγου διαδοθέντος.

[2] Lact. mort. 14. The question lies really, I think, between Galerius and the Christians – unless it was a simple accident: for Constantine's account is so embellished that I entirely disbelieve in the story of the thunderstorm. The speaker's object is to show that this fire was a 'judgment' for the poor old Emperor's wickedness: even if he had known that it was the doing of Galerius, he would not have said so, as it would not have suited his immediate purpose.

I. The case against the Christians stands thus:

(1) They were in a state of great provocation.

(2) The two excuses, so confidently given, by Lactantius and Constantine (though the latter is, on the face of it, a make-up) undermine each other.

(3) It was the common report of the

made to exchange the refinements of a sumptuous court for the quarries of Sirmium, or the mines of Thebais. They might well be exasperated. They might well think this an excellent opportunity for a demonstration:—it was not often that two Emperors could be burned in the same house. Those who accused the Christians did not stop to consider how contrary to all Christian principle was the idea of saving their freedom (for their lives were not in question), by causing the deaths, not only of the two princes, but of a vast and unoffending household. Galerius, who perhaps knew better than any man their innocence,

time, and had reached even to Caesarea. But it may be answered

(1) that the Christians were unlikely, both from their principles and their worldly prudence, to do such a thing; although Mr Hunziker, the Protestant Minister at Unterstrass, delights to depict the Catholics of Nicomedia as both Jesuits, who thought murder legitimate for a good end, and fools, who thought that Diocletian would be frightened and take the fire as an omen of displeasure from the gods;

(2) that Constantine's testimony is not of a character to invalidate that of Lactantius; and, granted (for argument's sake) that Lactantius' account is but a guess, may he not, with his fine historical sense, have guessed right?

(3) that it was the only natural thing that the Christians should be suspected. We can hardly use the ingenious argument of Dean Milman, that if the fire had been kindled by a Christian, he would probably have been a fanatic who would have openly gloried in his deed (see *Hist. Chr.* vol. iv. p. 220), because we have no proof that he did *not* do so.

II. The arguments against Galerius would be these.

(1) Even Mr Hunziker allows that it is quite in keeping with the very consistent character of the Caesar portrayed in the *Mortes*.

(2) The fortnight's inaction against the Christians clearly shows that nothing was proved (at any rate to Diocletian's satisfaction) that incriminated them, although everybody in the household was tortured.

(3) None of Galerius' retainers were put to the test—this is (I think) quite probably true, for the two reasons given in the text.

(4) Galerius' sudden departure is doubly suspicious: he desired thereby both to frighten Diocletian, and to avoid the risk of discovery.

There is one other solution which is extremely probable, I think, namely, that the first fire was a natural accident, and suggested to Galerius (or *possibly* to the Christians) the desirableness of an artificial one.

was of course loudest in his accusations. He had been assuring Diocletian all the winter that a plot was hatching among his favourite Christians. What further need of proof had he? The Christians had torn down the edict, expressly stating that they stood to the Roman empire in the same relation as the Sarmatians and Goths: and now they had set fire to his house. But the wise Diocletian did not let himself be hurried into destroying his favourite old servants on a mere suspicion. The whole of Diocletian's immense *familia*, whether they were Christians or not (a fact to be noticed), were subjected to torture to see if the cause of the fire could be ascertained. The number of the defendants was so great, that all the magistrates in the place were called in, and special commissions issued, so as to get the work done as speedily as possible. Diocletian himself sat constantly. Galerius sat as constantly at his side, and plied him with passionate eagerness. Nothing of great consequence was found out. Galerius never offered to put his own household to the test. As the fire most probably broke out in the part of the palace inhabited by the chief Emperor, the omission went unsuspected, especially as we may be sure there were none of our brethren in Galerius' quarter. The evidence against the Christians was so little satisfactory, that in spite of Galerius' zeal Diocletian would take no further proceedings against them[1].

A fortnight passed by, and things seemed settling down, when a second conflagration was discovered,—happily in time to prevent much mischief. But it was enough for Galerius'

[1] I use with (I feel confident) a better context Pfarrer Hunziker's decision (p. 172) *dass alle gerichtlichen Verhöre, dass die ganze Untersuchung keine Aenderung der Ansicht...nach sich zog.*

purpose[1]. A terrific explosion occurred. Midwinter as it was, Galerius gathered his household together, took leave of his father-in-law, protesting with curses that (however Diocletian might feel) *he* was afraid of being burned alive by these Christians, and started, like a hurricane, for his Danubian province. Diocletian trembled for the unity of the empire, and forced himself to make one more concession to the will of his formidable heir. Emperor as he was, he was weak that day: these sons of Zeruiah were too hard for him[2].

Yet it is impossible to doubt that Diocletian was now thoroughly convinced of the guilt of the Christians, and that the next step in the persecution was not so entirely a concession to Galerius as the first had been. Where arguments had failed to persuade, accident or *ruse* met with a perfect success. Diocletian seems to have set himself to the investigation of the causes of the second fire with a determined prejudice. He was fully bent upon wringing the secret out of his Christian servants. This second time it would appear that none of the heathen domestics were put to the test. So powerfully was the Emperor's mind impressed with a belief in a Christian conspiracy that, in the first paroxysm of his nervous agitation, his suspicions fell upon those who were most dear to him. The Brethren (as they called themselves) always had a secret understanding, a sort of freemasonry, with one another. If there was anything toward, the Empress herself (sickening thought!) was bound by her religion to take part in it, hating even

[1] Mr Hunziker mentions the second fire only in a little footnote on p. 169, and dismisses it as a very dubious occurrence: but we ought hardly to allow our theories to make us so dainty about plain facts.

[2] II. Sam. iii. 39. The histories present a real parallel, and an instructive one.

house and husband for the kingdom's sake. And besides, there was that poor barren woman, the wife whom Galerius loved so little, living apart from her husband in the great house which Diocletian had built for her at Nicomedia. What wonder if she should wish to be delivered from the spouse, who disliked her, and hated her creed beyond all bounds? Who could tell what secret meetings and dire *sacramenta* had been held in the dreary grandeur of that palace? And so Diocletian began his work of putting down the Christian plot with his daughter Valeria, and his wife Prisca. These unfortunate ladies, unused as yet to pain or hardship, might perhaps have been martyrs, but not protomartyrs. They suddenly found themselves suspected of the most hideous and unnatural plot, on the ground of their adopted religion. In their terror they either renounced their faith, or disclaimed their inclinations, and (though with reluctance) sacrificed[1].

Those potent chamberlains, who had been the prop of the palace,—Dorotheus, Gorgonius, and others[2]—were the next in that sad precedency. They proved more staunch. They had been faithful all their lives: if now they would only touch the sacrifice, or swear by the gods, it would still be possible to believe them innocent: but they refused. Diocletian became angry at their refusal. An Empress and

[1] Lact. mort. 15: *et primam omnium filiam Valeriam coniugemque Priscam sacrificio pollui coegit.* The 45th Canon of the Council of Illiberis, two years later, does not withhold from catechumens the august title of 'Christians.'

[2] Eus. hist. eccl. VIII. vi., Lact. mort. 15: *potentissimi quondam eunuchi necati, per quos palatium et ipse ante constabat.* It would seem as if Lucian was dead before this time, both from the fact that he is unmentioned in Eusebius, and also because Dorotheus seems, by the notices of him, to be in the office which Lucian held, of *praepositus cubiculariorum* (τοὺς ἀμφὶ τὸν Δωρόθεον βασιλικοὺς παῖδας, Eus. l. c.; and VIII. i. 4).

her daughter had yielded; who were these that they should disobey? They were now, since the First Edict, his slaves. Yield they must. Confess the secret they should. A page named Peter was taken and scourged, naked, in the market-place; but it was of no avail. They rubbed salt and vinegar into his torn and numbed wounds, to restore the circulation and the pain, and enable him to confess: but the young eunuch was true to his name, and stood as firm as a rock[1]. A fire was then brought, and a gridiron; and what was left of his much-mutilated frame was applied piecemeal to the burning. At last he succumbed,—his body, not his spirit,—and passed away victoriously. Diocletian seems by this time to have had enough and too much of such atrocities. Dorotheus and Gorgonius, and several others, were strangled quietly[2]. And so the palace was purified from all that was best within it, and Diocletian was confirmed in the belief that he was checking the beginning of a rebellion[3].

[1] Eus. hist. eccl. VII. vi. 4: τοιοῦτον τῶν βασιλικῶν ἑνὸς τὸ μαρτύριον παίδων, ἄξιον ὡς ὄντως τῆς προσηγορίας· Πέτρος γὰρ ἐκαλεῖτο.

[2] Eusebius tells us the poor creatures suffered as dreadfully before they died, as Peter did: but he is in profound ignorance with regard to the sequence of events at Nicomedia, and his account is entirely rhetorical.

[3] It is very necessary to observe that these heroes were not, properly speaking, martyrs of the persecution at all. They certainly did not die under the terms of the bloodless First Edict,—according to which the worst that befell them was slavery: the only way in which men could possibly die under that edict was for refusal to abandon the books. Their death was entirely a private matter. Peter died actually under torture; he was not executed at all. And the tortures were not applied to him as a punishment for his Christianity, but in the investigation of the causes of the second fire. The others were put to death because their positive refusal to sacrifice was construed into an acknowledgment of guilt: it is even possible that some, in their agonies, may have confessed the crime, whether guilty or not guilty. Torture had become legal for them, since by the First Edict they had fallen into the position of slaves. Eusebius joins the martyrdom of Bishop Anthimus of Nicomedia

There were other circumstances which led him also to the same conclusion. It was quite certain that the East was in an uneasy state. This had been one of the weightiest pleas which the fierce Caesar and his partisans had urged all through the winter. And now there came the undoubted news that some one had made an attempt in Syria to raise himself to the height of the throne[1].

In all probability the rising was of no greater consequence than this:—There were five hundred soldiers,—who may or may not have been Christian men,—engaged in dredging the entrance to the harbour of Seleucia, the port of Antioch. These men grew tired of their hard work, just as the soldiers of Probus had grown tired of planting vineyards in Pannonia; and, following their precedent, threatened the life of Eugenius their captain. However, they left him one hope of escape: he was to be saved on condition of his establishing himself as an independent sovereign. It so happened that there was no garrison then in the immense and powerful city of Antioch; and Eugenius believed that he was popular there. Accordingly, he suffered himself to be taken thither by his little band of drunken desperadoes, robed in a purple mantle that had been borrowed for the occasion from the temple of some god, and entering the town towards evening, settled himself in the imperial palace. No sooner, however, was he observed, than the good citizens of Antioch rose *en foule*,—women and men alike,—and with such weapons as are used to repel the unexpected intru-

very closely with these occurrences, but it is evidently a mistake, arising from his desire to mention the martyrdom and not knowing where else to place it.

[1] Eus. hist. eccl. VIII. vi. 1: οὐκ εἰς μακρὸν δὲ ἑτέρων κατὰ τὴν Μελιτινὴν οὕτω καλουμένην χώραν, καὶ αὖ πάλιν ἄλλων ἀμφὶ τὴν Συρίαν ἐπιφυῆναι τῇ βασιλείᾳ πεπειραμένων. He mentions the Second Edict as the consequence.

sions of a burglar, easily overmastered the poor besotted knaves. Before midnight was come, there was not a man of them — except a few who had run away — that was not either dead or a prisoner. And so ended the reign of Eugenius[1].

Such is the account given some eighty or ninety years afterwards by the orator Libanius to Theodosius. But Diocletian appears not to have treated the matter with the same levity. All the chief officers of Antioch, and of her port, were put to death, it is said, without any trial, and without being heard in their own defence. The fact that two near ancestors of that pagan orator were among the delinquents who were punished, is indeed a reason for acquitting the Church of Antioch of all complicity; but at the same time it gives cause to think that Libanius has much understated the importance of the revolt: and the very severe visitation which fell upon the city shews that in Diocletian's opinion, the East was in a most inflammable state, and needed the letting of a little blood to cool it. And in a country where the Christians were so many, there was every fear lest, disaffected as they must now be[2], they

[1] This account is only abridged from that which is given by Tillemont, *Empereurs* vol. ix. pp. 73, 74: I have not consulted the original. The references to Libanius (ed. Reiske) are given by Burckhardt as p. 323 foll., pp. 644, 660 foll. This author adds that the Antiochenes showed themselves weak; and it is he who first indicates that the punishment of the pagan family of Libanius is against the theory of a Christian conspiracy. There is in fact no reason, for even ascribing the little affair to this particular time, except as giving some support to the statement of Eusebius, for there is no date, or hint of a date, in the works of Libanius. The connexion of the passages is first due to the researches of Valesius.

[2] We do not know for certain how long a time elapsed between the publication of the First Edict and the fire, or between the second fire and the Second Edict: the Second Edict may come anywhere between February and November, 303.

would cast in their lot with the first insurrection that took place.

And Syria was not the only part of the empire which seemed likely to be embroiled in this manner. It is said that at the very same time, a claimant had arisen in that borderland of Cappadocia and Armenia, which went by the name of Melitene. No mention has yet been discovered of any rebellion in that quarter, which can be made to serve the elucidation of this history as conveniently as the rebellion of Eugenius does. The fact however, though obscure, is quite indubitable. And here, there is far more reason for suspecting a connexion with Christianity, than in the case of the mutiny at Antioch. The statement in Eusebius, that a rebellion was attempted in Melitene, is confirmed by comparison with a writer, who would be of no weight by himself, but in conjunction with a better authority, becomes of very great importance. Simeon the Metaphrast assures us that word was brought to Diocletian and Maximian—by which name Galerius must be understood—that the whole of Greater Armenia and Cappadocia was up against them, and that the inhabitants with one consent were waiting the signal for revolt, because of their unalterable attachment to the faith of Christ:—that Diocletian was so perturbed by the news, that after consulting with Galerius for a considerable time, having in the end called a council of his greatest nobles, and sat with them three successive days from dawn to dusk, he at last determined to recall the officers who commanded in those two districts, as incompetent to deal with the crisis, and sent out instead two able and upright Greeks,—one of whom, named Lysias, he put in command of the frontier garrisons,—

while to the other, Agricola, were committed absolute powers over the whole civil administration of that region, and both the *limitanei* of Lysias and the soldiers in the more inland cities were placed at his disposal[1].

The following story gives to an attentive reader some notion of the extent to which Christianity was thought to be inculpated in these seditions. Lysias had received injunctions to make a conscription of all proper men in Cappadocia,—doubtless with a view to meeting the emergency which was expected. Among others who were put down upon his list was a man called Hiero, in the prime of life, who had a farm near Tyana. The soldiers who were sent to fetch this man, found him working on his property, with his labourers about him. When Hiero saw them coming, he knew what their business was; and feeling by no means

[1] Sim. Metaphr. martyrium S. Hieronis (in Surius, Nov. 7) c. 1.: *cum esset eis nuntiatum, quod omnis Armeniorum regio et Cappadocum facit contra improbum eorum decretum et resistit eorum iussis, postquam satis longo tempore consultarunt:* and in the martyrdom of St Eustratius (Surius Dec. 13) c. 2: *quod tota magna Armenia et Cappadocia illorum edicto repugnarent et iam unanimes spectarent omnes ad defectionem, immutabilem habentes animum in Dominum...propter haec fuit conturbatus Caesar Diocletianus, et cum omnes suos accersiuisset proceres et tribus diebus a mane usque ad uesperam cum eis consultasset* cet. The author of these documents is one of the most perplexing problems in the history of literature (see Glass's article in Herzog's *Real-Encyclopädie*). I cannot pretend to settle his date out of hand, but follow the best authorities in placing him early in the tenth century. His learning was as great as his piety and his credulity, so that it is just *possible* that the introductions to these two martyrdoms may have been elaborately concocted out of Eusebius' hint and Lactantius' account of the deliberations which preceded the persecution. But it is far more likely that the information was derived from a more direct independent source, which is now either lost or latent in some Armenian monastery. We should never believe this author, unless (as Gibbon says in a parallel case) our assent were extorted from us by the inherent probability of the facts recorded: but here, at any rate in the first document mentioned, all the narration seems of the most trustworthy character possible.

inclined to leave his farm and go to serve—possibly against friends of his own who were thinking of insurrection—he detached the handle of the pickaxe which he was using from the blade, and laid it lustily about the intruders' ears and shoulders. Having thus gained a momentary advantage, he, and eighteen men who were with him, betook themselves to a cave hard by, and prepared for a siege. The attempt, however, was so hopeless that Cyriac, the brother of Hiero, had little difficulty in persuading him to surrender before he compromised himself further in the eyes of the law; and Hiero, with some of his kinsmen, took leave of his blind old mother, and set out obediently for the town of Melitene. So far we have not so much as heard that he was a Christian; but as soon as he reached the headquarters of Lysias, he suddenly found himself in prison along with one and thirty other men who were all Christians. These persons seem all to have been guilty of much the same crimes as himself. With these brethren he made a compact that none of them would sacrifice, if they were required to do so; but the next day when he was brought up before Lysias, that officer required nothing of the sort; but only asked whether he was the fellow that had wounded the recruiting sergeant's men. Hiero confessed his deed. The commandant, wishing to make an example of these sturdy malcontents, ordered his hand to be cut off at the wrist[1]. The others were well lashed with

[1] In the curious will, by which Hiero disposed of his property, he left the amputated hand to his mother, on the understanding that she should write to the *Magnificentissimus* Rusticius, who was *Curator Rei Publicae* in the important city of Ancyra, and ask him for a house at Bardesane, in which to lay the hand up. It adds greatly to the historical worth of the story, that the affecting scene where the old blind woman receives her martyred son's hand is not spoiled by her recovering her sight. The communication with

the cat; and they were all thrust again into their jail. One of Hiero's kinsmen, who had come with him from Tyana, contrived to get out by bribing the *commentariensis* or warder, but the others either would not or could not escape. Four days later, all these prisoners were brought again before Lysias. Though the indictment against them was one of contumacy and treasonable conduct, not of Christianity, the two things are now treated as synonymous. The rebels were not asked whether they were Christians: it was assumed that they were so, from the fact of their being rebellious. They were ordered to disarm the suspicion of a conspiracy by sacrificing. This they refused to do, and were accordingly beheaded for conspiracy.

An incident like this adds greatly to our understanding of the state of affairs which elicited Diocletian's Second Edict[1]. We see that even early in the winter there were

the dignitary in Galatia certainly allows a suspicion of some previous communications between them, which may have been semi-political: and another person of high rank, a *Senatorius* called Chrysaphius, purchases the martyr's head of the avaricious judge. There are very suspicious secret messages also in the martyrdom of St Eustratius, which concern not only the laity but the clergy also.

[1] I have no hesitation in referring to this same period the episode, which has caused a good deal of discussion, of the town in Phrygia which is said to have been destroyed. The authorities are:

I. Lact. inst. div. v. 11: *aliqui ad occidendum praecipites extiterunt, sicut unus in Phrygia, qui uniuersum populum cum ipso pariter conuenticulo concremauit.*

II. Eus. hist. eccl. VIII. xi. 1: ἤδη γοῦν ὅλην χριστιανῶν πόλιν αὐτανδρον ἀμφὶ τὴν Φρυγίαν ἐν κύκλῳ περιβαλόντες ὁπλῖται, πῦρ τε ὑφάψαντες κατέφλεξαν αὐτοὺς ἅμα νηπίοις καὶ γυναιξί, τὸν Χριστὸν ἐπιβοωμένους· ὅτι δὴ πανδημεὶ πάντες οἱ τὴν πόλιν οἰκοῦντες, λογιστής τε αὐτὸς καὶ στρατηγὸς σὺν τοῖς ἐν τέλει πᾶσι καὶ ὅλῳ δήμῳ, Χριστιανοὺς σφᾶς ὁμολογοῦντες, οὐδ' ὁπωστιοῦν τοῖς προστάττουσιν εἰδωλολατρεῖν ἐπειθάρχουν.

Whatever the *details* of the transaction were, there can be no doubt, from the concurrence of two such different authorities, that there was such a town so destroyed. It will be seen in the last note that the chief magistrate of the capital of Galatia was a Christian;

troubles in Melitene. As the population consisted of Christians almost to a man, any disturbances that took place there, even if the occasion was something quite secular, were sure to be caused by Christians. Galerius would greedily seize upon the fact. Though there was probably no organised conspiracy before Agricola and Lysias were sent out, it is most likely that the arrival of the new governors, with their suspicious vigilance, and bearing the First Edict in their hands, caused a real explosion. The Christians saw how strong they were, at least numerically, upon the spot; and knowing that the Church was spread even beyond the Pillars of Hercules, they might be excused for miscalculating the support they were likely to receive. And more than this. The neighbouring kingdom of Armenia, under the influence of St Gregory the Illuminator, had just accepted Christianity as its established religion. Tiridates the King, who had formerly been an officer in the Roman army, and had greatly distinguished himself in the war with Persia, by which Galerius had set him upon the throne of his fathers, was either already baptized, or very soon to be

there is no reason why the *rationalis* and the *dux*—civil and military authorities—of a town over the border of Phrygia should not have been so too, and it would go hard but, between them, they could incite the whole Christian population and garrison to resist the First Edict. Lactantius does not say (as Gibbon II. 476 affirms) that the people were burnt *in* the Church, and that that was the total extent of the conflagration: his meaning undoubtedly is, that the severity of the First Edict was overpassed, and that *not only* the Church building but the whole town and populace were consumed. Gibbon points out that Ruffinus adds: *etiam cum optio uolentibus daretur:* but good Dr Milner *in loco* shews sensibly enough that they were permitted to retire on *condition of sacrificing*. This perfectly tallies with Eusebius' statement that they were burned *just because* (ὅτι δή) they were Christians:—it is but another case of Christianity being considered synonymous with wilful rebellion during these troubles in the East.

baptized. His sister, Chosrouduchta, had been for many years a professed Virgin of the Church. A Christian adventurer might easily entertain hopes of friendly countenance from the King who was his brother Christian, against the persecutors of their common faith.

And so the tale was told to Diocletian at Nicomedia that the East, which he had long known to be in a ferment, had broken out. The thoughtful old Emperor did not lay all the blame at the doors of the Church, as is shewn by his punishment of the Gentile magistrates of Antioch. But he was convinced that his own chamberlains had turned against him since the promulgation of the edict against Christianity. It was at least a curious coincidence that these tumults had gathered head just at the moment when that edict became known in the Christian East[1]. So much for the wisdom of persecution! This was all that came of making Christianity illegal! It had just called into array the discontents, which it had been intended to cow. And Diocletian had known all along that this would be the result. Yet there was no time to spend in useless regrets. Decided measures must be taken. Unless the mutinous spirit were promptly quelled, it would spread like wildfire over the whole world. The fanatics of Syria and Palestine would be ablaze in a moment. The turbulent Alexandria would forget the lessons it had cost so much to teach her. In

[1] Mr Hunziker (p. 174) is, I find, within an ace of being right here: his only mistake lies in believing that there were *no* troubles in Melitene till the arrival of the First Edict. He says: *Für die Unruhen in Melitene wenigstens gibt die älteste einheimische und darum dem ferne stehenden Eusebius mit seinen unbestimmten Gerüchten weit vorzuziehende Quelle durchaus den Eindruck, dass wir es hier allerdings mit den christlichen Kreisen zu thun haben, dass aber diese Unruhen nicht zu einem bestimmt im Auge gehaltenen Zweck erregt, sondern die natürliche Folge des ersten Edicts waren.*

Africa, all Maximian's work would be undone, for the wild Moors of Barbary were ready to seize the first occasion of revolt. Perhaps the Bagaudae, who were already suspected of Christian leanings, would take up arms again in Gaul; and while the troops were drawn away to suppress them, certainly the girdle of forts along the Rhine and Danube would be too weak to keep the hordes of Teutons back. It was not as if the Christians were like a local nation, upon whom an Emperor could set his heel at once and crush them: they ran through all peoples, nations and languages, like the veins through a man's body; and they had an old saying, that if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. And the worst feature of all was, that the rebellion had begun in the East, where it was quite certain—if it were allowed time—to attract the notice and support of the chafing Shah of Persia.

Alas, Diocletian had begun the persecution with a hope that he would not be obliged to make any personal attacks. He had passed what was really neither more nor less than a Tests Act, to exclude persons who openly professed a certain cultus, and were members of a certain confraternity, from certain rights of burghership. There was nothing in the First Edict to constitute a persecution. No attempt would be made to enforce its action so far as the persons were concerned, except where some special conduct should demand it. But Diocletian found that its consequences led to a full-grown persecution. It was too late to revoke the First Edict. There was nothing to be done but to go forward into the fray. And yet even the next step was as moderate as it was judicious and bold.

That most momentous step which he next took was

the issue of an order founded on that chapter of the great statute of Valerian which he had at first omitted: but in the re-enactment it was subject still to the one unalterable saving clause which Diocletian had resolved upon from the beginning. No blood was to be shed in the transaction: but the Clergy were the object of the decree. Valerian had ordered that all Bishops, Priests and Deacons, should be executed on the spot where they were taken: Diocletian's Second Edict went forth, enjoining that all over the world the officers of the Church—from Marcelline of Rome and Cyril of Antioch, to the simplest Readers who crouched under their thrones — were to be immediately seized and cast into prison[1]. They were not even to be allowed the option of recantation. Apparently not a word was said about proposing to them the test of sacrifice. If they were Clergymen, that was enough: they were to be kept in durance, at the good pleasure of the sovereign, as hostages

[1] Eus. hist. eccl. VIII. ii. 5: *καὶ ἡ μὲν πρώτη καθ' ἡμῶν γραφὴ τοιαύτη τις ἦν· μετ' οὐ πολὺ δὲ ἑτέρων ἐπιφοιτησάντων γραμμάτων προσετάττετο τοὺς τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν προέδρους πάντας τοὺς κατὰ πάντα τόπον πρῶτα μὲν δεσμοῖς παραδίδοσθαι κ.τ.λ.* The same words are repeated with one unimportant variation in mart. Pal. i. 2. In hist. eccl. VIII. vi. 8, as the consequence of the seditions in Syria and Melitene, it is stated that *τοὺς πανταχόσε τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν προεστῶτας εἱρκταῖς καὶ δεσμοῖς ἐνεῖραι πρόσταγμα ἐφοίτα βασιλικόν.* The sequel shows that a very liberal construction must be put on the word *προεστῶτας*. So too Lact. mort. 15: *comprehensi presbyteri ac ministri, et sine ulla probatione ad confessionem damnati cum omnibus suis deducebantur.* Lactantius does not indeed speak directly of any special document containing this order, but he evidently has it in mind: the fifteenth chapter gives a rapid survey of the whole course of the persecution at Nicomedia, from 303 to 311, without any dates being introduced to break up the unity of the persecution. The words *sine ulla probatione* certainly confirm what we gather independently from Eusebius and the Acts of the Martyrs, that the opportunity of sacrificing was not offered yet; and the words *ad confessionem* shew incidentally that martyrdom was not at all intended.

for the quietness of the Catholic Church. Thus everything stood as it did before the reign of Gallienus: and except that no bloodwas to be shed, the desires of Galerius were fulfilled.

Diocletian's marked anxiety to prevent bloodshed must not be set down to any great warmth of sympathy with the Christians, or any special softness of heart. He was out of temper with the Christians; and though he was not naturally a cruel man at all,—far from it,—yet neither was he a sentimental man. Several occasions have been spoken of already in this work, on which the soldier who hewed Aper down did not scruple to use the sword when policy recommended its use. His firm resolution not to use it against the Christians, was the result of careful study of former persecutions. He thought he saw where Decius and Valerian had failed. With regard, indeed, to the special case of these Clergymen, it would have completely defeated his purpose to put them to death. What he wanted was to check any attempt at a general Christian rebellion by holding a terror over their leaders. If he should destroy the Bishops, he would not only be committing a great outrage upon many innocent persons; he would be committing a still grosser blunder of diplomacy:—he would lose his hostages. But not the special case alone called for a different mode of handling. That coarse plan of slaughtering Christians right and left was proved by experiment to be unsuccessful altogether. Lactantius well touches this point, when he puts into the mouth of the Emperor the words: "As a rule, they are only too happy to die[1]." Diocletian

[1] Lact. mort. 11: *illos libenter mori solere.*

did not exactly wish to deny the Christians a pleasure, but he knew well enough that one martyr makes more,—that there would be endless trouble given by the honours which the Christians would lavish on the remains and graves of the dead[1], and that the sight of life-blood would rouse the fanaticisms, equally deplorable, both of Pagans and of Christians, and so make the return to the ways of peace more hopeless than ever. Even before the Second Edict was issued, Diocletian had witnessed with his own eyes one case in point, which must have had a peculiarly revolting effect upon his affectionate nature. The bodies of his own poor eunuchs, who had been killed on suspicion of the arson, had been buried with reverence and care, as became men who had been faithful till (as Diocletian supposed) the last days of their life. But the brethren had found where they were laid. Such wild exciting scenes had taken place over their tombs,—such prosternations and nightly watches,—that, for the sake of public peace and decorum, the Emperor had been forced to have the poor creatures' bones dug up again and thrown into the bay[2]. This was the inevitable result of killing Christian men. On the other hand, the votaries

[1] A good description of these enthusiastic meetings may be found incidentally in the splendid invocation of St Vincent in Prudentius peri steph. v. 138 foll.:

per te per illum carcerem
honoris augmentum tui,...
per quem trementes posteri
exosculamur lectulum,...
si rite sollemnem diem
ueneramur ore et pectore,
si sub tuorum gaudio
uestigiorum sternimur,
paulisper huc illabere
Christi fauorem deferens.

[2] Eus. hist. eccl. VIII. vi. 7: τοὺς δέ γε βασιλικοὺς μετὰ θάνατον παῖδας, γῇ μετὰ τῆς προσηκούσης κηδείας παραδοθέντας, αὖθις ἐξ ὑπαρχῆς ἀνορύξαντες ἐναπορρῖψαι θαλάσσῃ καὶ αὐτοὺς ᾠοντο δεῖν οἱ νενομισμένοι δεσπόται, ὡς ἂν μὴ ἐν μνήμασιν ἀποκειμένους προσκυνοῖέν τινες θεοὺς δὴ αὐτοὺς ὥς γε ᾠοντο λογιζόμενοι. Lactantius alludes to the same incident with his usual sourness (inst. div. v. 11): *non tantum artus hominum*

of the Crucified would soon grow tired of letting themselves be imprisoned and disgraced, when they found that nothing further came of it. The name of Confessor, however much it might be honoured when the persecution was over, was but lightly esteemed, while the name of Martyr could be had for the asking[1].

The Emperor Valerian, in an earlier decree which he fulminated against the Church, had endeavoured to put Christianity down without bloodshed[2]. The method which he adopted was the separation of the Bishops from their flocks by a perpetual banishment. His experiment was a failure, for the simple reason that, so long as the Bishops were only in exile, an epistolary correspondence could be kept up; and also because little pains was taken to subject the Priests to the same treatment, so that they were still left to keep the enthusiasm and faith of the Church alive. Diocletian's aim was not quite the same as Valerian's; for though he was bent upon weakening the Church, and even demolishing it so far as its outward presentment was concerned, his measure against the Clergy wears every appear-

dissipat, sed et ossa ipsa comminuit, et in cineres furit, ne quis extet sepulturae locus; quasi uero id affectent, qui deum confitentur, ut ad eorum sepulcra ueniatur, ac non ut ipsi ad deum perueniant: he calls the author of the deed *uera bestia*, and *haec tanta belua*. The same charge of lipsanolatry was laid against us as early as the days of St Polycarp.

[1] Eus. hist. eccl. v. iii. 3: ἐκεῖνοι ἤδη μάρτυρες, οὓς ἐν τῇ ὁμολογίᾳ Χριστὸς ἠξίωσεν ἀναληφθῆναι ἐπισφραγισάμενος αὐτῶν διὰ τῆς ἐξόδου τὴν μαρτυρίαν, ἡμεῖς δὲ ὁμόλογοι μέτριοι καὶ ταπεινοί.—Yet we may question which is really the nobler title.

[2] This earlier edict was in the year 257. Pontius the Deacon in his Life of St Cyprian, his master, expresses a very lively contempt for this kind of punishment: the great Prelate, who was *interned* at Curubis, found it a very pleasant retreat, and was quite able to administer his diocese from the spot: see Ruinart p. 182. The Priests were *supposed* to share the same fate, as we see from the first portion of the Acts of St Cyprian, which were published within the Saint's own lifetime (S. Cypr. epist. lxxvii. 2, Hartel).

ance of being only a temporary measure of precaution[1]. He did not mean all Clergymen henceforward to be liable to special penalties, as Valerian had: he meant to put them out of the way of abetting a present conspiracy. In this design he hoped to succeed, not by banishing, but by casting into the strict surveillance of a prison, not Bishops only, but all those who were in Holy Orders, even down to the Readers and Exorcists. Christian hopes of rebellion would be crushed by so tremendous an exhibition of imperial power; while Christian aspirations after martyrdom would be cooled by the positive refusal of gratification.

And yet Diocletian was not wholly wise. This temporising shift was well suited, indeed, for the immediate purpose; but it could not permanently cripple the great Body. There were only two ways to prevent the Church from doing mischief in the end:—the one was, to follow to its full consequences the policy on which he had acted towards her all through his reign: — the other was to cut and stab and burn and trample the life out of her altogether. And if the last great Emperor of Rome had been aware how nigh he was now to the innermost *penetralia* into which the corporate life of Christianity had been hunted back, he would have been glad (it may be) to take every Bishop in the world and put him to death. In all the persecutions,

[1] Hunziker says quite justly (p. 174): *Die verschärfende Massnahmen, welche den Inhalt des zweiten Edicts bilden und die Kirchenvorsteher bestrafen ... sind eine politische Vorsichts- und Strafmassregel des Kaisers, die durch die Renitenz der Christen gegen die Ausführung des ersten Edicts hervorgerufen war. Sie sind daher auch blos temporärer Natur und stehen mit der Christenverfolgung nur in mittelbarem Zusammenhang.* In support of the statement that the Second Edict was only temporary, he rightly appeals to the Third Edict, that is to say, the amnesty at the Vicennalia.

special stress was laid upon the punishment of Bishops: but the pagan world only knew of them—as of all else in our system—in their exterior and official capacity. They killed or banished them because they were heads, ringleaders, persons of influence. They knew nothing of them in their spiritual capacity. If Diocletian had been told how the Catholic and Apostolic Church teaches (that which she has received), that only by the laying on of the Apostles' hands is given the communicated Spirit, which is the Life of the Body, and that the severance of the episcopal succession is the severance of the historical bond between the Church and her Head, he would scarcely have been sorry to destroy the Bishops one and all, though they had numbered thousands. He had already, unwittingly, struck the two most telling blows. A third would have been the stroke of grace. He had destroyed the means of meeting to receive the Bread of Life. He had destroyed (he fondly hoped) the means of teaching the Word of Life. If by the annihilation of the Apostolic Order he had destroyed also the means of propagating the Life, Paganism would have triumphed gloriously, and the Church would have lain beneath his feet, a corpse. But our Redeemer has not founded a Church that is to die. Nay, it was written long before the days of Diocletian: "The fierceness of man shall turn to Thy praise, and the fierceness of them shalt Thou refrain: He shall refrain the spirit of princes, and is wonderful among the kings of the earth."

CHAPTER V.

THE EXECUTION OF THE TWO EDICTS.

> Armata pugnauit fides
> proprii cruoris prodiga,
> nam morte mortem diruit
> ac semet impendit sibi.
>
> PRUDENTIUS.

IT is impossible to trace with any precision the progress of the persecution. The First Edict, followed closely—sometimes (as it seems) accompanied—by the Second, crept slowly and fitfully from shore to shore, from city to city, like some hateful plague or cholera. Its movements, to us who watch them from afar, seem governed by no law. Many private and local causes tended to delay its publication[1]. In the capital of Thrace, near as it was to Nicomedia, the proconsul, whose wife was a Christian, did not make it known until Epiphany in the following year. In Africa and Numidia it was posted in the months of May or June. It reached Caesarea, where Eusebius lived, in the end of March; "when," as we are told with singular pathos, "the day of our Saviour's Passion was just drawing on[2]." At Alexandria, if we may unravel the confusion of the dates in the Chronicle, the sick-

[1] Dr Newman's novelette *Callista*, the scene of which is laid in Africa in the time of the Decian persecution, gives a very natural picture of these local causes of delay.

[2] Eus. hist. eccl. VIII, ii. 4.

ening news arrived precisely in time to mar the blessed joy of Easter morning[1].

This section of my essay will be an attempt to arrange our materials so as to show how far the several details of the edicts were put in execution, and what different aspects this first part of the persecution wore in the several parts of the empire. The attempt, I fear, must almost necessarily prove a lame one. In the first place, our documents are but scanty. Lactantius, according to the purpose of his book, leaves the history of the persecution almost untouched, and treats only of the more striking events of state. The eighth book of Eusebius' Church History, for the purposes of a methodical review, is utterly worthless, from its exasperating lack of chronology: and though his monograph on the Martyrs of Palestine is, on the contrary, beautifully systematic, yet the scope is too narrow to give us a very complete picture of the condition of the Church, even within the horizon of Cæsarea. The chief sources of information are the various genuine Acts of the Martyrs,—which are (of course) chargeable with the same defect: they describe the bearing and the sayings of men when brought to trial, but they too seldom illustrate the social life of Churchmen during the times of persecution, and the ways in which they escaped the violence of the storm. We have scarcely any *Acts of the Confessors*. There are hardly any accounts of private occurrences. And it must not be supposed that we can even calculate the total number of martyrdoms under Diocletian by adding up the list of these Acts which are preserved. On the one hand many of the legends are quite untrue. And on the other hand doubt-

[1] Easter fell late,—April 18: Eusebius' *Chronicle* puts the edict on this day, agreeing with the *Chron. Alex.* and with Theodoret.

less an immense share of the documents has perished accidentally: but in many cases it seems that the judges themselves forbad the official report to be entered on the books,—partly out of spite to the Christians, who used to pay the clerks to give them duplicate copies of the record, to be recited afterwards in Church[1],—and partly because they were conscious that their cruelties were distinctly illegal, and feared to leave the full statement indelibly inscribed in the archives of their provinces[2].

And not only is the material scanty, but it is extremely perplexing. It is often difficult in the extreme to discover the true date of a martyrdom. Owing to the way in which the governors took upon themselves to alter the provisions of the law for better or for worse, or to delay its enforcement, a trial often turns upon points which at first sight seem to fix it as belonging to the earliest part of the persecution, while closer inspection proves it to belong to a later period. The legitimate working of an earlier edict is often crossed and hampered by the influence of later ones. And we are often forced to suspend our critical judgment upon the worth of any given record, from our unfortunate lack of detailed archaeological knowledge on such matters as the extent of the powers of proconsuls and curators. The original papers have suffered so much in the process of later redactions that it is well nigh impossible to determine what is old and what is later fable[3].

[1] The brethren who sent the Acts of Tarachus to the Church of Iconium say in their prefatory Epistle: *quia omnia scripta confessionis eorum necesse erat nos colligere, a quodam nomine Sebasto, uno de spiculatoribus, ducentis denariis omnia ista transcripsimus.*

[2] Particularly the case with Dacian in Spain: consult the exordium of the *Passio S. Vincenti Leuitae.* Arnobius, in his first book, makes the same complaint in Africa.

[3] Thus we are compelled to own that the presence of miraculous occur-

As soon as Diocletian had finally made up his mind to persecute the Church, letters were despatched to his western brethren, informing them of the terms of the edict[1]. Of all the lost documents of the period, there are none—not even the edicts themselves—which the historian mourns after so sadly, as the missives in which the venerable Augustus hinted to Constantius how far it behoved the letter of the law to live, and urged upon Maximian the propriety of 'transacting the business without blood.'

I. It was pretty certain beforehand that Constantius would share, almost to a nicety, the feelings and the policy of Diocletian. He was the man after Diocletian's own heart. The crafty old Emperor had designed him to succeed to the primacy of the empire, above Galerius, wishing mind as far as possible to predominate over bluff force. Diocletian's scheme for the balance of government was to have in each moiety of the empire, a statesman and a soldier, shield and sword arms of the administration; the statesmen to hold (as far as this could be secured) the first and third places, so that at each vicennial abdication, by the alternate precedency of East and West, a statesman might always be to the fore. On this principle Constantius, though Diocletian's own es-

rences is not always a sign of later falsification. Miracles are narrated, for instance, with perfect good faith in the account of St Theodotus of Ancyra, which has not been tampered with at all since it left the hands of Nilus, the worthy shopkeeper-bishop's friend (Ruinart p. 303 etc.). They appear still more strikingly in the singularly quiet story of Tarachus, Probus, and Andronicus (Ruinart, p. 392), supplemented by the eye-witnesses themselves.

[1] Lact. mort. 15: *etiam litterae ad Maximianum atque Constantium commeaucrant ut eadem facerent: eorum sententia in tantis rebus expectata non erat.* Of course this statement has, of itself, little weight, but I have already expressed the reasons why we should believe it, p. 100.

pecial favourite, had been given to Maximian for his Caesar and his son. When the soldier Augustus began to wax very bloody (which could not be helped sometimes), the statesman Caesar might be able to mitigate the effects.

Now Constantius was undoubtedly averse from the persecution. Both natural constitution and reflexion had made him merciful to all men. The judgment of the Church historians upon him might have been biassed by their gratitude to his son: but the heathen writers all give him the same character. "An uncommon man," says Eutropius, "with very marked regard for other people: the inhabitants of Gaul not only loved but adored him,—and all the more because under his sway they had escaped the suspicious prudence of Diocletian as well as the bloody haste of Maximian[1]." Eumenius labours hard to make the cruelty of Constantine appear as politic as the gentleness of his father, with which he contrasts it[2]. Constantine himself declares that he abhorred the savage characters of Diocletian and the two Maximians, and says that his father alone attempted to act with the consideration of a civilised man[3]. It was plain therefore that persecution would imply nothing very brutal under Constantius. And in the particular case of Christianity, all his religious feelings were on the side of toleration, even more than Diocletian's were. Although he was doubtless a heathen still[4], Bishop

[1] Eutr. X. 1: *uir egregius et praestantissimae ciuilitatis...hic non modo amabilis, sed etiam uenerabilis Gallis fuit, praecipue quod Diocletiani suspectam prudentiam et Maximiani sanguinariam temeritatem imperio eius euaserant.*

[2] Paneg. IX, chapters v, vi, x.

[3] apud Eus. Const. II. xlix: ἔσχον ἔγωγε τοὺς πρὸ τούτου γενομένους αὐτοκράτορας διὰ τὸ τῶν τρόπων ἄγριον ἀποκλήρους, μόνος δ' ὁ πατὴρ ὁ ἐμὸς ἡμερότητος ἔργα μετεχειρίζετο.

[4] The Panegyrics speak repeatedly of Constantius' reverence for the gods,

Theonas' description of Diocletian, exactly fitted him: he was '*not yet* enrolled' on the Church's lists. His son—a bad authority on the subject, it may be confessed—says that he "called upon the Father in all his acts with admirable devoutness[1]." Eusebius, whose exaggerations certainly overlie a stratum of fact, avers that he knew of only one universal God, and condemned "the polytheism of the atheists[2]." Like Diocletian, he had filled his house with Christian servants. Like as Diocletian's consort, Prisca, was almost, if not altogether, a Christian; so, according to some accounts, Helena, the first wife of Constantius, was already a convert before the cold policy of Diocletian wrested their love-marriage apart[3]. A persecution had doubtless often been urged in the imperial councils by the two Maximians, and as often scouted by their more prudent colleagues. Constantius' knowledge of Diocletian's mind in the matter would show him that there must be some overwhelming necessity in the present case, and so hinder him from rebelling altogether against the edict: while at the same time it would show him that a mere nominal perse-

though this need not mean much, any more than in the case of Diocletian. Of course he must needs conform outwardly to the state religion as he was not a converted Christian. At the same time it is probable that his inclination to Christianity was more positive and conscious than Diocletian's. No particulars of his Pagan devotion are recorded as with Diocletian; and he is not said to have cultivated augury: still he may well have done so, since the art was encouraged for centuries later by baptized Emperors.

[1] apud Eus. Const. II. xlix: *μετὰ θαυμαστῆς εὐλαβείας ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἑαυτοῦ πράξεσι τὸν πατέρα θεὸν ἐπικαλούμενος.*

[2] Eus. Const. I. xvii. 2.

[3] There is no real reason to believe that Zosimus is right in denying the validity of the marriage, although it suits a few fathers (as Ambrose, de divers. serm. III. p. 1236. *Paris*, 1603) to point their morals with the story. The preponderance of even pagan authority is against it.

cution would accord with the wishes of the supreme Augustus, as fully as with his own wise policy and gentle heart.

And while Constantius was unlikely, from these private considerations, to press the law against Christianity beyond the least possible strictness, there was no public necessity in his quarter of the globe for carrying the matter farther. The Church was not so powerful in Gaul as it was in the East, nor were the Christians of that land so fiercely intolerant as those of Africa. There was little fear of an insurrection of the believers there: and the best way to prevent such a catastrophe was to dissever their interests from those of their Oriental brethren by not making them partakers of their sufferings.

Some doubt has been entertained on the question whether Constantius did not hinder the persecution from being œcumenical, by refusing to take any part in the work at all. The ingenious Henry Dodwell, in his anxiety to reduce our estimation of the sufferings, and therefore of the vitality, of our faith, endeavoured to prove that Gaul, Spain, and even the most of Africa, were under the government of Constantius, and therefore quite exempt. The few martyrdoms, as he counts them, which took place in Africa, were accomplished, he argues, not under the general edict, but by special local rescripts of Maximian. It is, however, an easy thing to prove a theory, if you may choose your facts. His indignant and orthodox opponent, Ruinart, goes too far the other way, and tries to show that even Gaul, at that time the acknowledged sanctuary of the world, was as fruitful of martyrdoms as any other country[1]. The fact is

[1] Ruinart *Acta Sincera*, p. lix. foll.

that Africa was not in any way subject to Constantius, any more than Italy was: that the connexion of even Mauritania Tingitana with the prefecture of Gaul rests on very slight foundations: and that Constantius was not himself Praefectus Praetorio of Gaul. Thus, though "all beyond the Alps" had been committed to the superintendence of Constantius[1], he bore no actual rule over any region except that in which his personal presence was required. Such was the nature of the Caesars' power: their jurisdiction was not separated from that of their Augusti by a line as strongly defined as that which bounded the East and West. They were rather the moveable representatives of their several chiefs, stationed with absolute power wherever a temporary cause claimed the closer inspection of supreme authority. Constantius seems never to have visited any other portion of the prefecture of Gaul in which he was seated, besides France and the Rhenish frontier, and Britain.

It is difficult to discover how far Constantius really participated in the persecution, but that he did so is plain, not only from the fact that the edict was now the law of the land, to which he must needs conform; but also some positive statements in the Acts of St Crispina, who died at Teveste in 304, prove that in Maximian's part of the empire, the name of the Caesar Constantius was officially quoted as countenancing the promulgation of the edict. There can be no doubt that he published this Test Act entire, but with the hearty acceptation of Diocletian's saving clause, that no blood was to be shed. In spite of the

[1] This is the rather vague account of Aurelius Victor: it needs correcting by the place in Lact. quoted below, p. 151.

counter-assertion of Eusebius, it is certain that all the Churches in Gaul, that were worth destroying, were destroyed[1]:—these could be restored: but from the irreparable injury of God's truest temple, the human body, Constantius shrank[2]. Having thus observed the letter of the law, he did not proceed to the logical consequence of making all Christian assemblies penal: there is even some reason to think that he permitted—for a time, at least—the attendance of Christian Chaplains in his own household, who celebrated the Divine Offices within the palace-walls[3]. No stress was laid upon the clause which prescribed the burning of the books. He did not attempt to wrest them out of private hands. Probably he made believe that the act was satisfied by the destruction of those copies which were found among the *ministeria* of the demolished Churches. At any rate, when Constantius' son came into power, the African Donatists besought him that they might be tried by Gallican Bishops, on the ground that these had never been exposed to the temptation to be traditors[4]. With regard to the third clause of the First Edict, we may gather that Constantius at least published it, and took *some* steps—whatever they were—towards applying it, from the curious

[1] Eus. h. e. VIII. xiii. 13; *μήτε τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν τοὺς οἴκους καθελών.* He guesses, and states the guess as a fact.

[2] The words belong to Lactantius: *nam Constantius, ne dissentire a maiorum praeceptis uideretur, conuenticula, id est parietes qui restitui poterant, diruit passus est: uerum autem dei templum, quod est in hominibus, incolume seruauit* (mort. 15).

[3] Eus. Const. I. xvii. 3: *ὡς μηδὲν ἀποδεῖν ἐκκλησίας θεοῦ τὴν ἔνδον ἐν αὐτοῖς βασιλείοις συγκροτουμένην πληθύν, ᾗ συνῆσαν καὶ λειτουργοὶ θεοῦ, οἳ τὰς ὑπὲρ βασιλέως διηνεκεῖς ἐξετέλουν λατρείας ὅτε παρὰ τοῖς πολλοῖς οὐδὲ μέχρι ψιλοῦ ῥήματος τὸ τῶν θεοσεβῶν χρηματίζειν συνεχωρεῖτο γένος.*

[4] Read their exaggerated letter contained in St Optatus i. 22: *de genere iusto es, cuius pater inter ceteros imperatores persecutionem non exercuit, et ab hoc facinore immunis est Gallia.*

story which Eusebius had got hold of. To all the officers of his household, and even to those who held provincial governments, says this author, Constantius offered the choice of sacrificing or being dismissed. Some of the persons concerned preferred their faith, and some their posts. In the sequel, the worthy prince discovered to them what he had privily intended by this device. He drove away from his palace those who had served their God so ill, judging that their loyalty to the Emperor would be as light; but the conscientious persons he settled in all the most confidential offices in his house, declaring that no sums of money could be so valuable to him as these good men[1].

Even the Second Edict, ordering the arrest of the Clergymen, must have been promulgated by Constantius, because it alone explains the one martyrdom of that time, circumstantially related, to which the English Church can lay claim. A certain Priest, pursued by the Roman officials, made his way to the colony of Verulam, and boldly entering the camp, claimed shelter from a young heathen legionary named Albanus. The young fellow was too good-natured to refuse, and kept him there for many days concealed. Observing his guest perpetually performing his devotions, he began to make inquiries concerning our religion, which the Priest answered in such a manner, that after some patience the soldier became a convert. Meanwhile, it came to the ears of the governor, that Albanus was harbouring this person whom the law was trying to hunt down; and he accordingly summoned him to answer for the misconduct. The novice (so runs the tale) presented himself before the judge, at the moment while the judge was sacrificing, clothed

[1] Eus. Const. I. xvi.

in the Clergyman's *caracalla*, and was threatened with the same punishment as his friend should have borne. When he was asked his nationality, the young Roman soldier forgot his pride, and answered: "Why do you ask? I am a Christian." To the question of his name, he replied: "My parents call me Alban; but I serve God." He was ordered for his unsoldierly contempt of discipline to be beaten first, and then beheaded. The sentence was executed that evening, outside the city, across what was then a very rapid stream, on the slope of the pleasant hill, where now stands one of the stateliest of English Cathedrals in the city which bears his name[1].

II. Constantius was the only one of the four Emperors concerning whose conduct in the matter there could be any doubt. Roughly speaking, Lactantius' vigorous expression is correct:—"So the whole earth was agitated; and, Gaul alone excepted, from the East even unto the West was felt the savagery of three most rancorous beasts[2]." Maximian was only too delighted to obey the law[3]. It is a strange but inexpugnable fact in psychology, that the sins of the flesh are always inwoven with the sin of cruelty. The Augustus of Milan was a most conspicuous example

[1] I have shelled off the fabulous husk of the story. Bede takes the account from Gildas, but tries in spite of his master to make out a great many martyrdoms for the Church of England, whereas Gildas accounted for the scanty number by saying that we received the Gospel very coldly. The only other contemporary British martyrs named are two Clergymen of Caerleon, Julius and Aaron. The fact is that the 'streak of silver sea' defended us (as usual) from the capricious tyranny of Rome.

[2] Lact. mort. 16: *uexabatur ergo uniuersa terra, et praeter Gallias ab oriente usque ad occasum tres acerbissimae bestiae saeuiebant.*

[3] Lact. mort. 15: *senex Maximianus libens paruit per Italiam, homo non adeo clemens.*

of the abominable alliance. His passions were so entirely beyond the control of his judgment, that not even the hostages, whom subject nations had placed beneath his care, were too sacred for his rapacious hands[1]. And by the innate kinship of wickedness, he was bloodthirsty beyond the run even of his savage countrymen. His cruelty was not, like the cruelty of Galerius, sprung from religious fanaticism, impelled by a revengeful hatred, employed with a strong and intelligent purpose. Maximian was cruel for cruelty's sake. Blood was his luxury. The intelligence that Diocletian had at last consented to a general persecution must have thrilled him with an intense delight; for his vulture-like instinct told him that the business could never be transacted without a sumptuous feast of blood.

The prefecture of Italy was his, including all from Regensburg and Vienna, to Nice and Cagliari and Malta. Here the edicts were thoroughly well worked. However African proconsuls might doubt about the application of the law, it was certain death to be sent on remand into that peninsula, as St Felix found to his satisfaction. Yet strangely enough, we have fewer Acts extant from Italy itself than from any other land, save the immediate province of Constantius. I am inclined to think one partial reason of this phenomenon to be, that Christianity had not absorbed the whole population in Italy in the same way as it had in Africa. Thus in the year 304 one of the extremely rare notices of a popular outbreak—almost a riot—against

[1] The accusation proceeds from Aurelius Victor, not from the Churchmen, though the ecclesiastical writers quite agree in the verdict. Julian the Apostate turns him with ridicule out of the banquet of the gods, on account of his coarse licentiousness.

the Christians, occurs at Rome, and seems to accelerate, if not occasion, the publication of the last, worst edict before the abdication of the two old Emperors[1]. But Maximian was lord of a finer Aceldama than Italy. Africa had far the largest tale of martyrs[2]. It lay entirely at the mercy of the rude Augustus[3]. The vast population had all but universally become Christian: and the Christians of Africa, from Tertullian down, were characterised, above all others, by a fiery zeal, which developed into obstinacy and wilfulness even in saints,—among sinners into frantic heresies and sanguinary schisms. When we reflect on the intolerable pride and murderous bigotry of the Donatists, we cannot wonder that so harsh a government as Maximian's found plenty of work for executioners. When St Austin's holy labours at last put an end to Donatism and to Manichaeanism, he had accomplished also the death of the Catholic Church of Africa:—when nothing was left to be fierce about, Christianity itself died out. Such were the persons among whom Florus in Numidia, and Anulinus at Carthage, were set to work to put the law in force.—Spain too, although she was undoubtedly in the same prefecture as Gaul, and therefore more or less subject to Constantius, added a goodly contingent to the noble army. The town of Saragossa, alone, had the honour of furnishing eighteen in the course of two

[1] Act. S. Sabini, Baron. ad ann. 301: see above, p. 90. The conquest of Rome was, and will be again some day, the last and crowning victory of the Church: cf. Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 2. It was natural that men should there cling longest to that which was connected with Rome's old glories.

[2] This statement is borne out by what even the distant Eusebius says hist. eccl. VIII. vi. 10: μάλιστα κατὰ τὴν Ἀφρικὴν καὶ τὸ Μαύρων ἔθνος.

[3] Lact. mort. 8: *cum ipsam imperii sedem teneret Italiam, subiacerentque opulentissimae prouinciae uel Africa uel Hispania.*

years' persecution[1], of whom one was the magnificent young Archdeacon, Saint Vincent. All these deaths may be traced to the cruel subserviency of one Dacianus, who was made president of the province—as it appears from the Acts—not by Constantius, but by Diocletian and Maximian. It would seem as though the officers of government were not appointed by the Caesars, but by the Augusti; unless indeed we have here another case, like that of Lysias and Agricola in the East, of a special commissioner sent forth for the occasion. Yet, though Constantius was unable to hinder the appointment of this cruel man, these same Acts seem to hint at some difficulty, which Dacianus experienced in prosecuting the wishes of his lord Maximian. He is forced to bide his time, and seize an opportunity[2]. I conceive this difficulty to have been caused by the vigilant legality of Constantius the Caesar. The persecuting magistrate never dares to claim the authority of Constantius to support his violations of the edict: he only speaks of the orders of Maximian. And one of the men who had passed through Dacian's bloody hands alive, the great Hosius of Cordova, writing afterwards to the tyrannical Arian Emperor who was grandson both to Constantius and to Maximian, says: "I was a confessor even at the first, when persecution arose under your grandfather Maximian[3]:"—he leaves the other grandfather unmentioned. But the Caesar, notwithstanding

[1] Prud. peri steph. iv.,—a poem in honour of them all together.

[2] Act. S. Vinc. c. 2, Ruinart p. 323: *cum saeuiendi in Christianos forte occasio cecidisset.* Cf. Prud. peri steph. v. 21—

rex, inquit, orbis maximus
qui sceptra gestat Romula
seruire sanxit omnia
priscis deorum cultibus.

[3] apud Athan. ad sol. uit. agent. p. 838 (ed. Paris 1627): ἐγὼ μὲν ὡμολόγησα καὶ τὸ πρῶτον, ὅτε διωγμὸς γέγονεν ἐπὶ τῷ πάππῳ σου Μαξιμιανῷ.

his vigilance, was unable to prevent some martyrdoms even in Gaul itself. Thither, too, had been despatched a terrible personage of the same stamp as Dacian, named Rictius Varus, who is mentioned in many a Gallican legend. At the same time it seems pretty clear that Maximian himself was personally present at nearly all these French martyrdoms[1]. His capital was situated in part of what the Romans called Gaul; and he seems to have been fond of visiting the rest of that country. Constantius was not an independent sovereign, but merely an extension (as it were) of the person of Maximian: naturally, therefore, in the presence of the Augustus, the Caesar became a subject and was powerless. Maximian was irresponsible, and might with impunity override the laws.

Maximian saw at once which parts of the edict it would be most useful for his purposes to press. There was no political suspicion against the Christians in Africa and Italy to draw his attention to the last chapter of the statute: degradations and civil punishments were of no avail in this part of the world. In Maximian's territory the whole persecution turns upon the first two clauses[2]. Not that we read much of the demolition of the Churches: this was probably done in many cases, but in the domains of the fiercer Emperors we find a slackness about these milder provisos, in proportion to their greater zeal to kill and torture[3]. But the purpose of destroying the buildings was to stop the *synaxis* or assemblies of the faithful. African

[1] I except the soldier St Ferreolus of Vienne, because he was a *deserter; reus maiestatis, rebellis,* he is called.

[2] Burckhardt calls a passing attention to this fact: see p. 341 of his book.

[3] Optatus i. 14 speaks of the Churches as not being yet *given back again* to the Christians at the time of the synod of Cirta.

Christians were unlikely to desist from holding their meetings. Maximian did not beat about the bush to find his game, but went straight to work with all who gathered to the Christian Sacrifice, even in private houses. Unfortunately Diocletian's law had not mentioned in express terms what was to be the penalty for such offences as holding the *collecta* or refusing to surrender the books. He had ordered that no blood should be shed; so that obviously he had intended that the punishment should be simply the loss of civil rights, in other words, that such offences would be no more than a confession of the crime of Christianity. Maximian chose to make them separate transgressions; and though he could not behead men for simply being Christians, he made a capital matter of these outward acts of profession.

The story of the nine and forty martyrs of Abitina will shew how strictly the first clause was enforced in Proconsular Africa. The party had met in the house of one of the readers, under the lead of a member of the Carthaginian Senate named Dativus, and had there celebrated the Dominicum. They were all put in irons and driven off to Carthage, and brought before Anulinus, the well-known governor of that province. Dativus, being the chief, was interrogated first, in the presence of all the rest, and confessed himself a Christian, and pleaded guilty of having taken part in the service. His admission that he was a Christian made him *ipso facto* (by the new statute) an outlaw; and accordingly, senator as he was, he was placed on the hobby-horse to make him say who had been the ringleader in the crime. Before, however, he could answer, another man, named Thelica, cried out, "We are *all* Chris-

tians: it was *we* who held the meeting." Thelica was now put on the rack and told to name the ringleader. "Saturninus," he said (naming the priest who had officiated), "and all the rest[1]." When the torture had been vigorously plied for some time, Anulinus told the man that it would have been much better to obey 'the Emperors and Caesars,' and sent him to prison under sentence of death. As soon as the examination of Dativus was resumed, Fortunatianus, a young heathen advocate[2], stepped forward and laid a heavy accusation against him. Dativus, he said, had come into his father's house at a time when his father was from home and he himself engaged in professional duties, and had induced his sister Victoria and two other maidens to run away with him to Abitina, though he was a total stranger in the house, and had never entered it except on this scandalous occasion. Victoria, who was one of the prisoners, emphatically gave her brother the lie. "No one persuaded me to run away," she said, "nor did I come to Abitina with Dativus: this I can prove by the evidence of the townsmen. I did it all at my own prompting, and of my own freewill. For I have always attended the meeting, and kept the Dominicum with my brethren, because I am a Christian." The screws were turned to elicit a confession from the senator, but he circumstantially denied the fierce accusations of Fortunatian, calling upon Christ not to let

[1] The editor's commentary is: *O martyrem primatum omnibus dantem! non enim presbyterum fratribus praetulit, sed presbytero fratres confessionis consortio copulauit. quaerente igitur proconsule Saturninum, ostendit: non quod illum prodidit, quem secum aduersus diabolum pariter dimicare cernebat, sed ut illi panderet integre se celebrasse collectam, quando cum ipsis etiam presbyter fuisset.* Does it imply that sometimes, in stormy days, they were less regular?

[2] We may observe that *ipsis temporibus alienus* implies the young man's subsequent conversion.

him be confounded. When they returned to the question, who had been the prime mover of the *collecta*, he at last cried out, "What have I done? There was more than one. Saturninus is our priest." Anulinus turned to the priest, and told him it was an infringement of the commands of 'the Emperors and Caesars' to bring together a meeting. Saturninus, 'prompted by the Spirit of the Lord,' retorted, "We celebrated the Lord's ordinance without a fear." "Why?" said the governor. "Because," he answered, "the Lord's ordinance cannot possibly be intermitted." When Dativus had been sentenced and removed, Saturninus was examined with torture to see if he had summoned the meeting, but he refused to claim the honour, only admitting that he had made one of the party. A reader called Emeritus next tried to create a diversion by saying that *he* was to blame, and that the meeting had taken place in his house, but Anulinus took no heed, and proceeded with the evidence of his superior. "Why," he asked, "did you act against the order?" The priest replied, "The Lord's ordinance cannot possibly be intermitted. That is the Law." The bewildered magistrate again urging that prohibitions were made to be kept, not broken, ordered worse tortures. Saturninus began to cry for mercy,—to God, not to man; still the proconsul caught at the hope that he would now acknowledge his guilt: but to the repeated question, why he had contravened the order, he only answered, "It is the Law. It is what the Law teaches." Even in his torments the faithful preacher preached that holy code for which he was glad to be punished[1]. And so, one after another, the brave men were tor-

[1] *legem sanctissimam etiam in tormentis presbyter praedicat, pro qua libenter supplicia sustinebat.*

mented, and confessed. Emeritus the reader being asked why he had allowed the Christians to enter his house, answered that they were his brothers, and that he could not turn his brothers from the door. Felix, a son of the priest Saturninus, answered the judge's question, whether he had taken part in any meetings, by saying simply that he was a Christian: the judge said, "Do not tell me that you are a Christian, but whether you have attended meetings:" an explosion of scorn was the reply, "As if a Christian could live without the Lord's ordinance! knowest thou not, Satan, that the Christian's whole being is in the Sacrament." Another brother, his father's namesake, who held a reader's dignity, was examined to see if he had any sacred books: he too only answered at first that he was a Christian, but when the knife, on which his father's blood was not yet dry, was applied to his ribs, he cried out that he had indeed 'the Scriptures of the Lord,' but in a place whence neither inquisitor's cruelty nor traitor's cowardice could drag them;—"I have them, but I have them in my heart." It was growing late in the day when the examination of the sisters began. Victoria having acknowledged her faith, her heathen brother contended that she had been driven out of her mind with unintelligible subtleties; but the girl answered, "This is my mind: I have never changed it." "Will you go with Fortunatian your brother?" said Anulinus, too humane a man to enjoy such work. "I will not," said she, "for I am a Christian, and my brethren are they who keep the commandments of God." Anulinus, dropping his judicial character, condescended to reason with her: "Take care of yourself," he said: "you see how anxious your brother is to provide for you." "This is my mind," repeated the

intrepid girl; "I have never changed it. I was at the meeting and kept the ordinance with my brethren, for I am a Christian." At last, there remained but one of the prisoners uncondemned, the youngest child of Saturninus, the little Saint Hilarian. His father, his two brothers, and his sister, a nun named Mary, had all been tortured and sentenced before his eyes. The proconsul, who wished to excuse him on the plea of having been misled by his elders, asked him, "Was it your father or your brothers who took you?" But the boy would not incriminate them, nor throw away his own reward. The childish treble (as the old editor says) was an echo of the father's tones, as Hilarian answered, "I am a Christian: at my own desire and of my own free will I joined in the service with my father and the brethren." Anulinus kindly tried to frighten the child with ugly threats. "I shall cut off all your long hair," he said, "and your nose, and your ears, and then turn you out." He had miscalculated the bravery of a Christian boy. "You can do just what you like," said the little fellow, "for I am a Christian." Anulinus pronounced his sentence. The judgment-hall rang with the child's loud answer, "Thanks be to God[1]!"

So severely were the fiery Africans visited for the simple act of meeting in a private house, — and that under the government of a humane and equitable proconsul. The next document which comes under our notice will shew the way in which the officials set about their task of destroying the ecclesiastical buildings, but it will also shew a great deal more:—the intimacies between pagan magistrates and Chris-

[1] Ruinart p. 338. The redaction which we possess is by an enthusiastic Donatist, but he has confined himself to making comments on the Acts, without tampering with the martyr's utterances.

tian pastors, which made it hard for the magistrates to enforce the law, and easy for the Christians to deal cowardly,—the way in which the cowards were eager to avert persecution by a gratuitous compliance,—the curious irregularity with which the storm burst in the different neighbourhoods. For other reasons besides the typical exhibition of the origin of Donatism, the minutes of the justification of Felix of Aptunga are among the most valuable historical relics of the time. Long as the fragment is, it is quite worth while to read it through, for the sake of the lively picture it gives of these times of persecution in Africa. The scene is the vicarial court at Carthage in the year 314. A person called Caecilianus, who had been in office at Aptunga in the first year of the persecution, is in the witness-box. The first part of the fragment consists of the recital by the clerk of the Acts of a preliminary trial of Caecilianus before the local magistrate. Agesilaus the clerk reads :—

Maximus. I speak on behalf of the elders of the Christian people belonging to the Catholic rule[1]. Their Imperial Majesties are themselves to hear the case against Caecilian and Felix who are making every effort to overturn the supremacy of that rule. It is against them both that we seek to substantiate the charges against Felix. For when the persecution was announced against the Christians,—that is to say, that they must either sacrifice, or give up any writings in their possession to be burned, Felix, who was then Bishop of Aptunga, had given his consent to the surrender of the Scriptures by the hand of Galatius in order that they might be destroyed by fire: and Alfius Caecilianus, who has the honour to stand before you, was at the same

[1] Of course the Donatists claimed the title.

time in office. And whereas it was an official duty at that time to make all sacrifice according to the proconsular orders, and produce whatever writings they had in obedience to the imperial law, and whereas Caecilian is (as you see) an old gentleman and unable to proceed in person to the imperial presence, my petition is that he be made to depose, whether he did write a letter which (as appears by a document proceeding from him) he had contracted to write, and whether the facts which he has stated in this document are true, and I beg that his deposition be entered in the minutes, in order that the proceedings of these men and their disloyalty to the laws may be unmasked in the imperial court.

Spectius the Duumvir (*to Caecilian*). Do you hear the petition which is filed in this court?

Caecilian. I had been into Zama with Saturninus to get some shirts; and when we had come back to Aptunga the Christians themselves sent to me in the praetorium, to say: 'Has the imperial mandate reached you yet?' I said, 'No, but I have already seen copies of it, and at Zama and at Furni I have seen Churches destroyed and books burned, so you may as well produce whatever books you have, in readiness to obey the imperial order.' Then they sent to the house of Felix the Bishop, to bring the Scriptures out of it, that they might be ready to be burned according to the imperial orders. After this Galatius came to us and proceeded with us to the place where they had been accustomed to hold their prayers. We took out of it the Bishop's throne and the epistles of salutation from other Churches, and all the doors were burnt according to the imperial orders. And when we sent to the house of the aforesaid Bishop Felix, the police brought back word that he was away. Now some

time after, on the arrival of Ingentius, the secretary of Augentius, who had been my fellow-aedile, I dictated to him at the request of my colleague aforesaid the letter which I wrote to Bishop Felix.

Maximus. I have it here. Let the letter be put before him, that he may recognise it.

Caecilian. That is it.

Maximus. Since he has recognised it as his own letter, I will read it, and I beg that it may be inserted in the Acts entire. (*Reads the letter aloud.*)

Caecilian presents his humble duty to Felix.

Ingentius met my colleague, his friend, Augentius the other day, and inquired whether in the year of my duumvirate any scriptures of your law were burnt according to the imperial mandate. I told him no more than how Galatius, one of your co-religionists, publicly produced the letters of salutation out of your Cathedral. I hope you are very well. I enclose the signet, which the Christians (and among them you and the man who keeps the praetorium) had sent to me to avert punishment;—you remember your saying, 'Here is the key; you may take away all the books you find in my stall and the manuscripts on the stone slab: only please be sure that the police do not take away the oil and the wheat.' And I said to you, 'Do you not know that wherever scriptures are found, the house must come down and all?' You answered, 'What shall we do then?' And I said to you, 'Make one of your own people take them out into the enclosure where you pray, and put them down there, and I will come with the police and take them away.' And we came there and took them all away according to the imperial command.

Since the letter has been read aloud, and he acknowledges that he sent it, we beg that what he has said may be entered in the Acts.

Spectius. What you have said is taken down[1].

Agesilaus (*to the Proconsul*). He has now looked over the letter again, and says that the remaining part which has been read is a forgery.

Caecilian. My lord, I only dictated as far as the place where it stands, 'I hope, my dear and reverend Sir, that you are quite well.'

Apronianus (*friend to Felix*). That is just the way that these wilful Dissenters from the Catholic Church always go on,—nothing but falsehood and browbeating, and theatrical rant, and unscrupulous consciences. When Paulinus was here as Deputy Prefect, a certain private person was hired to go about for all the world like a postman, to bring letters round to the Catholic union and mislead and frighten them. The conspiracy was detected however. It was all a lie invented against the most reverend Prelate Felix, to make it appear that he had betrayed and burnt the Scriptures. Ingentius, I mean (for all that was done was most distasteful to the uprightness and religious feelings of Caecilian), was hired to come, with a letter purporting to be from Bishop Felix, to Caecilian the duumvir, and to make him believe that he was sent by Felix. May some one read the very terms in which this fiction was couched?

Aelian (*the Proconsul*). Read.

Apronianus (reads). 'Say,' Felix says, 'to my friend Caecilian that I have been lent eleven costly manuscripts

[1] Here the reading of the minutes ends, and the clerk speaks in his own person.

of the Divine books, and as the time has come for me to return them, please declare that you burned them in your year of office, that I may not have to give them back.' Ingentius ought to be examined with regard to this matter, how far this was a contrivance and a fabrication, and how far he wanted to make the magistrate the abettor of a lie in order to bring Felix into infamy. Make him say at any rate who commissioned him with this intrigue about a secret understanding with Felix, to detract from the honour of Caecilian. I know somebody who was sent on an embassy by the opposite party all through Mauritania and Numidia.

Aelian (*to Ingentius*). At whose command did you undertake the business you are charged with having done?

Ingentius. Where?

Aelian. Since you pretend not to understand the question, I must speak more plainly. Who sent you to the magistrate Caecilian?

Ingentius. Nobody sent me.

Aelian. How did you come then to Caecilian?

Ingentius. Soon after we had arrived here, during the trial of Maurus, the Bishop of Utica, who bought his bishopric, Felix, Bishop of Aptunga, came up to the city to take part in the discussion, and said, 'Let no one communicate with him, because he has committed a fraud;' and I answered him, 'Nor with you either, if not with him, for you are a traditor.' For I was vexed on behalf of my old friend Maurus, for I had communicated with him abroad—because I ran away from the persecution. Then I went into Felix's own country, taking with me two elders, that they might see whether he had really been a traditor or not.

Apronianus. That was not the way he came to Caecilian: please ask Caecilian.

Aelian (to Caecilian). How did Ingentius come to you?

Caecilian. He came to me at my house. I was at breakfast with my workmen. He came there, and stood in the doorway. 'Where is Caecilian?' said he. 'Here,' said I. I said to him, 'What is the matter? is all right?' 'Quite,' says he. I answered him, 'If you are not too proud to have breakfast, come and have some.' He said to me, 'I will come back presently.' He came all alone. Then to my amazement he began to tell me he was my good friend, and to inquire whether the Scriptures had been burned in the year of my duumvirate. I said to him, 'You annoy me: you are an intruder, sir: leave my house;' and I spurned him out of the door. He came then again with the man who had been my colleague as aedile. My colleague said to me, 'Our Bishop, Felix, has sent this man to ask you to make him out a certificate, because he has been lent some valuable codices and did not want to send them back: be so good as to write to him that they were burnt in the year of your duumvirate.' I said to him, 'Is this the Christian ideal of honesty?'

Ingentius. My lord, let Augentius be summoned too. I am a man of honour; but take all my honour from me, if we do not possess his letter.

Aelian. That is not the point on which you have to defend yourself. (*To the policeman*) Fasten him. (*He fastens him to the horse.*) Now hang him up. (*To Caecilian.*) How did Ingentius come to you?

Caecilian. 'I was sent here,' he said, 'by our common friend Felix, to ask you to write him a note, "because," said he, "there's a certain fellow (worse luck to him!) who owns

some most valuable codices in my possession, and I'm loth to restore them: so make me a note to say they're burnt, that I mayn't have to renounce them."' I said, 'Is that a Christian's idea of honesty?' and began to upbraid him. And my colleague said, 'You will write it for our dear old friend Felix.' And so I dictated the epistle which lies on the table,—so far at least as I did dictate.

Aelian. You will not be afraid to hear your epistle read aloud. Observe again how far you did dictate.

Agesilaus (reads aloud)...*I hope, my dear reverend sir, that you will keep your health for many years.*

Aelian. Did you dictate as far as this?

Caecilian. Yes, so far. The rest is a forgery.

Agesilaus (reads). *I enclose the signet, which the Christians (and among them you and the man who keeps the praetorium) had sent to me to avert punishment;—you remember your saying, 'Here is the key; you may take away all the books you find in my stall and the manuscripts on the stone slab: only please be sure that the police do not take away the oil and the wheat.' And I said to you, 'Do you not know that wherever scriptures are found, the house must come down and all?' You answered, 'What shall we do then?' And I said to you, 'Make one of your own people take them out into the enclosure where you pray, and put them down there, and I will come with the police to take them away.' And we came there and took them all away according to the imperial command.*

Caecilian. It is all false from the place where my letter ends, where I say, '*Good health to you, my dear and reverend sir.*'

Aelian. Who do you assert interpolated your letter?

Caecilian. Ingentius.

Aelian. Mind, your assertion is incorporated in the minutes. (*To Ingentius.*) You are tortured to prevent you from lying.

Ingentius. I acted wrongly: I added to this letter in my vexation for my friend Maurus.

Aelian. His Majesty Constantine Augustus and Licinius, the Caesars, are pleased to shew favour to the Christians but do not mean that discipline should be relaxed; on the contrary, they desire that that religious code should be observed and respected: so do not flatter yourself because you tell me you are a Decurion and therefore cannot be tortured. You are going to be tortured that you may not lie,—a thing which seems unsuitable to Christians. And so speak candidly, or you will be tortured.

Ingentius. I have already confessed without torture[1].

This narrative leads us on from the demolition of the fabrics to the burning of the books. In Africa, this was the hottest part of the whole battle. Diocletian had formed no conception how strong was the attachment of the Christians to their Bibles. Maximian had seen more deftly how the matter lay. To excite a still fiercer opposition, and to display more vauntingly his brutal power, he made it a rule, that the Church officers should themselves, in person, deliver up their treasures to the magistrates[2]. The proposal with which Caecilian was charged, merely to take the books left in the enclosure, was something of an evasion of the law. The place where the manuscripts were usually kept was in some library

[1] The fragment is printed in most editions of St Optatus, and in the 9th vol. of the Benedictine edition of St Augustine, as well as in Routh Rel. Sac. IV. 286. The text is very corrupt, and the Latin very hard to construe.

[2] Act. S. Felic. Tib. i: *propositum est per colonias et ciuitates principibus et magistratibus, suo cuique loco, ut libros deificos peterent de manu episcoporum et presbyterorum.*

adjoining the Church: but on the first news of the persecution, in most places they were conveyed away and stored, generally, in the houses of those who read them at the service. Thus at Cirta, "when they reached the library, the bookshelves were empty. Felix, the perpetual flamen, Curator of the republic, said, 'Bring out what Scriptures you have that you may be able to obey the precepts and bidding of the Emperors.' Catulinus produced one roll of an extremely large size. 'Why have you given me but one? Bring out all you have.' 'We have no more, because we are Subdeacons: the Readers have the books.' 'Point us out the Readers.' 'We do not know where they live.' 'You do not know where they live: then tell us their names.' 'We are not going to betray people: here we are: order us to be executed.' Felix, the flamen, said, 'Take them to jail.' And when they reached the house of Eugenius, Felix said to him; 'Bring out your Scriptures,' and he brought four manuscripts. Felix said to Silvanus and Carosus, 'Show us the rest of the Readers.' They said, 'The Bishop has told you already that Edusius and Junius, your secretaries, know them all: let *them* show you the way to their houses.' Edusius and Junius said, 'We will show you them, my lord.' And when they came to the house of Felix, the patchworker, he brought five books: and when they came to the house of Victorinus, he brought eight: and when they came to the house of Projectus, he brought five big and two little books. And when they came to the house of Victor, the grammar-master, he brought out two codices, and four books in five volumes each. Felix said to him, 'Bring your Scriptures out: you have more.' Victor, the grammar-master, said, 'If I had had more, I should have brought them.' When they came to Eutychius' house, the

flamen said, 'Bring out your books, that you may obey the order.' He said, 'I have none.' The flamen said, 'Your answer is taken down.' When they came to the house of Coddeo, Coddeo's wife brought out six codices. Felix said, 'Look and see if you have not some more. Bring them out.' The woman answered, 'I have no more.' Felix said to Bos, the policeman, 'Go in and look if she has no more.' The policeman said, 'I have looked, and found none.'" A dull tale: but it shows that it was dull work, not so amusing to some minds as torturing prisoners; whence it was more unlikely that all the Bibles would be destroyed. And it shows that they went to work at Cirta very mildly[1].

This thought, that Bible-hunting was tedious and difficult work, explains a good deal of the leniency with which men treated the possessors of books. Thus good Bishop Mensurius, of Carthage, as we learn from a letter of his to the Primate of Numidia, left a number of heretical books of recent manufacture in his Church and library, on the same principle as the excellent monks at Einsiedeln set up an old black block in the place of their venerable image when the French troops drew near. Of course the pagan officers, in whose nostrils heterodoxy did not stink, knew no difference. The ruse succeeded: and the persecutors, having found without any trouble what they wanted, did not make any further efforts or demands upon the Christians. But there were certain busybodies, members of the Carthaginian senate, who knew the pious fraud; and they went off and confided their important secret of state to the Proconsul, Anulinus: the genuine articles in request, they said, were in the house of

[1] These *Gesta apud Zenophilum* may also be found in Routh Rel. Sac. IV. 320, as well as bound with Optatus and Augustine.

Mensurius: would it not be better to send and fetch them and burn them? The wise and timeserving Anulinus sent the meddlesome men away to mind their own business[1].

The Church of Carthage was still, as it had been under its princely martyr-prelate of the previous century, the school of moderation for Africa. Mensurius, walking in the steps of St Cyprian, had forbidden any honour to be paid to the memories of those who drew persecution wantonly upon their heads, by saying that they had copies of the Bible and daring the officials to take them away. He expresses a profound distrust of the characters of the men who acted in this manner. "Some," he says, writing to Secundus, "are persons of criminal lives, or debtors to the exchequer, who either would be glad to take this opportunity of persecution to be rid of a life so encumbered with debts, or think they would thus expiate and somehow wash off their misdoings, or actually look to gain money by it, and to enjoy luxuries in prison from the reverent devotion of the Christians[2]." This reverent devotion was indeed likely to do harm not only by thus encouraging bad men to run the risk of imprisonment, but to the Church at large. St Cyprian had found it necessary in his days, to urge cautious rules for the visitation of the brethren, for the for-

[1] An account of the correspondence between Mensurius and Secundus is preserved in St Augustine, breuic. coll. c. Don. iii. 13.

[2] S. August. l. c.: *in eisdem etiam litteris lectum est eos qui se offerrent persecutionibus non comprehensi et ultro dicerent se habere scripturas quas non traderent, a quibus hoc nemo quaesierat, displicuisse Mensurio, et ab eis honorandis eum prohibuisse Christianos. quidam etiam in eadem epistula facinorosi arguebantur et fisci debitores, qui occasione persecutionis uel carere uellent onerosa multis debitis uita, uel purgare se putarent et quasi abluere facinora sua, uel certe acquirere pecuniam et in custodia deliciis perfrui de obsequio Christianorum.*

midable organised troops of persons who went to the jail were beginning naturally to raise the dislike of the authorities[1]. And in like manner now, the Archdeacon, Caecilian, made it his work to regulate the performance of these acts of charity, and to hinder them from being ostentatious. But fair and wise as this conduct was, it is easy to see how, in the excited state of feeling into which the persecution had thrown the African fraternity, caution might be regarded as truckling. Mensurius was set down as a thorough traditor (although the Donatists never openly broke with him during his lifetime): it was said that he had lied with regard to the burnt books, and that they were Bibles after all[2]. Caecilian, upon whom all the vials of Dissenting wrath are poured, becomes a far more frightful figure. It was currently reported, that he took his stand day by day, at the prison doors, with a gang of grim myrmidons, armed with leathern thongs and scourges; and that whenever any one approached with food or drink for the martyrs, he was driven away grievously hurt: the viands destined for them were left for the dogs that roved the town, and the prisoners died of starvation in their dungeons, while the streets rang with the shrieks of the afflicted parents who were disappointed of their last farewell[3]. Secundus, the Primate of Numidia, wrote to Mensurius in condemnation of his policy, and with vehement eulogies on some of his own flock who had refused to give up the Scriptures,—just like the woman of old, who would not betray to the persecutors at Jericho the two

[1] S. Cypr. ep. ii. 2.

[2] S. August. l. c.

[3] This appalling description is given in the concluding chapters of the Donatist edition of the Acts of the Abitinian martyrs, which may be found in Dupin's Optatus.

Israelite spies, types of the New and Old Testament[1]. He boasted that when the local government had sent commissioners to him to beg for books, he had answered them, 'I am a Christian and a Bishop, not a traditor;' and that though they had pleaded but for a few waste scraps[2], he had not given them even this, after the example of Eleazar the Maccabee, who would not even pretend to eat the swine's flesh, lest he should set an example of prevarication[3].

[1] Austin shrewdly points out that if indeed the two spies do represent the two Testaments, the comparison tells in favour of Mensurius. "For Mensurius in his letters blamed those who, though they would not give up the Holy Scriptures, acknowledged that they had them: certainly that was not what the woman did, for she even denied that the spies were in her house, when they were asked for."

[2] *ecbola quaecumque:* if Secundus does not lie, it shews great laxity on the part of the officials.

[3] By way of a sad, or ludicrous, comment upon this boasting, I add the Acts of the Donatist Synod of Cirta (305), from Aug. c. Cresc. iii. 27:—

Secundus. Let us first try our own selves, and then we shall be able to ordain a Bishop on the spot. (*To Donatus of Masculis*) It is said that you were a traditor.

Donatus. You know how hard Florus pressed me to take the censer, and God did not deliver me into his hands; and since God spared me, do you also let me stand over till His judgment.

Secundus. What then are we to do about the martyrs: we only honour them because they were *not* traditors.

Donatus. Put me in God's hands: I shall render my account there.

Secundus. Stand on one side. (*To Marinus*) It is said that you too were a traditor.

Marinus. I gave Pollus some small papers: my books are quite safe.

Secundus. Cross over to one side. (*To Donatus of Calamus*) It is said that you were a traditor.

Donatus. I gave them some medical books.

Secundus. Cross over. (*To Victor of Russicas*) They say you gave up the four Gospels.

Victor. It was Valentian the mayor: he forced me to throw them into the fire. I knew that they would be destroyed anyhow. Pardon me this failing, as God Himself pardons it.

Secundus. Cross over. (*To Purpurius*) They say that you murdered your sister's two sons at Milevum.

Purpurius. Do you fancy you can browbeat me, as you have the others? What did you do,—you who were kept in custody by the curator and the municipal senate to make you give up the

The history of the persecution in Africa would be very incompletely given, if no allusion were made to the "pious obstinacy" (as Gibbon calls it) of St Felix, the Bishop of Tibiura. His simple steadfastness is of a type quite distinct from the arrogant pride of Secundus, and yet it must be felt to be nobler and more touching than the shifty contrivances of Mensurius. The day that the edict was promulgated in his Cathedral city[1], the good man was gone into Carthage. When he came back next day, he found that one of his Priests and two Readers were in prison, because they had not given up the sacred books, of which he himself had the key, and that the persecution was begun. The mayor of the little town, who had doubtless long beheld its venerable Christian Pontiff with some awe, ventured to send a clerk to fetch him, and asked him respectfully: "Bishop Felix, give us some books, or, if you will, any parchments that you have." It was a distinct toning down of the words as Diocletian had written them; but Felix answered: "I have some, but I give them not."

Scriptures? How did you get free from them, unless it was because you gave something or ordered something to be given? I am sure they did not let you go at large for nothing. For my own part I did murder and I make a practice of murdering all who cross me: so do not provoke me to say any more: you know that I will not put up with it from anybody.

Secundus the younger (to his uncle the Primate). Do you hear what he says against you? He is prepared to draw back and make a schism, and not he alone but all the men whom you are accusing. I know that they mean to let you go your way, and pass sentence of excommunication on you, and you will be left a solitary heretic! Therefore, for all that it matters to you, what has anybody done? they will have to give their accounts to God.

Secundus (to Felix of Rotaria, Nabor of Centurion, and Victor of Garbes) What do *you* think?

Felix, etc. There is a God to whom they will have to give account.

Secundus (*to them all*) You and God must settle. Take your seats.

All. Thanks be to God.

[1] It was published here on the 5th of June.

"What the Emperors have ordered comes before what you say. Give us some books to be burned." "It is better," said the martyr, "for me to be burned myself than for the Divine Scriptures, for it is better to obey God than men." The mayor sent him away with the request that he would reconsider the matter alone[1]. But on the third day he had not changed his mind, and said that he should make precisely the same answer to the Proconsul. Accordingly, he was taken in chains to Carthage; and brought one morning before daybreak before Anulinus, who asked him, "why he did not give up some spare or *useless* books[2]." But again Felix refused to take a helpful hint: "I have books," he said, "but I am not going to give them." Sixteen days more were passed in the deepest cell of the prison-house. On the sixteenth Anulinus sent for him at ten o'clock at night, and asked him the same question. His answer was the same: "I am not going to give them." Anulinus did not know what to do, and sent him in chains to the superior governor, the Prefect of the Praetorium. The Prefect, equally perplexed, put heavier chains upon him, and after a delay of nine days shipped him off "to the Emperors." They were four days on the sea,—he, in his enormous chain, tossed about in the hold of a transport ship among the horses' feet. His misery was so great that he neither ate nor drank all the way, until at last they

[1] Here we seem to have the action of the First and Second Edicts following one another in quick succession. Though a Bishop, Felix is not put in chains till the 24th of June, which leaves time for the Second Edict to have come. Yet I must confess I am sceptical about the oecumenicity of the Second Edict. The doubt has never been started before; but there are very few undoubted traces of its working, and no direct mention of its publication, anywhere but in the East.

[2] *quare scripturas superuacuas non reddis?*

arrived at Agrigentum. Thenceforward, his captors courteously entreated him, as Julius had entreated Paul. The brotherhood at Agrigentum were allowed to pay him the most emphatic respect. His passage through the old historic towns of Sicily,—Catania, Taormina, Messina,—was like a royal progress. From thence they crossed to Italy. At Venusia at length he found his liberty. The Prefect of Italy was determined to let him go, if the Bishop would suffer it. He ordered his heavy manacles to be struck off, and gently addressed him. "Felix," said he, "wherefore give you not up the Scriptures of the Lord? or perhaps indeed you have none?" Not even the reverential tone in which the magistrate spoke of his beloved book could induce him to lie or to truckle. His answer was the same as ever: "I have, indeed, but I give them not." "Slay Felix with the sword," said the Prefect. Felix answered, "Thanks be to Thee, O Lord, who hast vouchsafed to deliver me." On the 30th of August he was led out to die. Then he spoke thus: "God, I thank Thee. I have lived fifty-six years in this world. I have preserved my virginity. I have kept the Gospels. I have preached the faith and the truth. O Jesu Christ, Lord God of heaven and earth, I bend my neck as an offering to Thee, who endurest unto everlasting, to whom is brightness and splendour for ever and ever. Amen." The simple Acts do not mar their period by adding that he was slain[1].

Such accounts as these are an abundant proof that a persecution of the Christian Church in the fourth century was absurdly ill-timed. The government had no longer to deal with a few persons belonging to an obscure sect,

[1] Ruinart, p. 313.

who kept aloof from the rest of the world and might be extinguished without anybody feeling it. Christianity had worked like leaven into the whole lump of society. One pagan officer, charged with the execution of the law, writes to the local ringleader of the corporation to be extinguished, and addresses him as *Parens Carissimus!* Another pagan officer, speaking of the man who in his neighbourhood was the chief priest of the obnoxious religion, styles him to his pagan colleague *Episcopus Noster!* In order to stimulate these magistrates to do their distasteful work, the blood-thirsty *Deus* at Milan was forced to enact that any who let a sturdy recusant go scotfree, should lose his own head as the price of mercy[1]. And yet African Christianity was not uprooted.

III. When the student turns his eyes from Africa to the dominions of Galerius, he is at first sight perplexed at observing that there seems to have been some backwardness in the persecution there, during the whole of the year 303. Though the Acts of St Agape and St Chionia who received the palm in 304 reveal that some steps had been taken in the previous year to destroy the books at Thessalonica, in other places the edict was not published at all till January. In the second year of persecution a strange and sudden crowd of martyrdoms appear. The fact is easily explicable. The hideous presence of the Caesar in his own provinces was first felt in 304: during all the first season he was in the East[2].

[1] So says St Augustine, breuic. coll. c. Don. III. xv. 27: *quod illi auditum quomodo illo dimisso renuntiare potuerint sine suo exitio, non apparet:* and again xvii. 32: *et ordo et curator et beneficiarius ad discrimen capitis peruenire, qui Secundum tradere nolentem impunitum dimisisse prodebantur.*

[2] Eus. mart. Pal. 2.

Perhaps the loftiest of all the pieces of Christian literature evoked at the time of the great struggle, is the Passion of St Philip of Heraclea. It is the only record from this quarter of the empire which can with certainty be referred to the time before the Fourth Edict, and it is of some special interest as bringing out once more the laxity with which the governors treated that part of the edict which bespoke the levelling of the buildings; and it again brings out the social complications by which the persecution was retarded. The city of Heraclea in Thrace, which lay in the general prefecture of Galerius, was the seat of a Christian exarchate; and this office was admirably filled towards the close of Diocletian's reign by one Philip, who suffered martyrdom in the second year of this persecution. When the edicts were promulgated in the town, the Prelate happened to be in the Cathedral, performing some Divine Office in the midst of a great congregation. The news was brought to him that persecution was afoot. His friends, who knew the cruelty of Galerius and were aware of the special edict against the Bishops, besought him to flee at once; but he refused to leave the Church, and stood calmly there, prophesying to the agitated brethren that the intentions of the tyrant would prove ineffectual. It was the eve of the Epiphany; and from this circumstance the holy Bishop bade them draw lessons not of hope only, but of triumph and glory. "While the blessed Philip was still thus discoursing, came Aristomachus, the Stationarius[1] of the city, by the President's order, to shut up the Church against the Christians, and seal it with

[1] Ducange explains: *Milites apparitores, et officiales præsidum, qui dispositi per prouincias certis locis denuntiabant magistratibus, quid ageretur.* He does not notice the sense of *inuenire* = *inuentariare*, but I think it is required here.

wax and signet. The blessed Philip said: 'O man of a foolish and dreary creed, who thinkest that Almighty God dwelleth within walls rather than in the hearts of men, not retaining the words of holy Esaias, who said: Heaven is My Throne, earth the footstool of My Feet: what house will ye build Me?' The next day, the Stationarius, having made an inventory of all the vessels and appurtenances of the Church and also sealed it, departed. Then all we brethren, giving ourselves up to sorrow, perceived into what grief and how great straits our city was come. The blessed Philip began to ponder very earnestly, with Severus and Hermes and the rest, what the present need required should be done; and leaning upon the door of the Lord's House suffered not himself to go away anywhither else from the see that had been committed to him.[1]" The next days were spent in precautionary measures, to prevent any possible panic from proving contagious in the flock.

"Afterward, when they had assembled in Heraclea to celebrate the Lord's Ordinance, the President Bassus (arriving) found Philip with the rest standing by the portals of the Church. When he was sat down in the usual manner to administer justice, they were all brought in unto him, and he said to Philip and the rest: 'Which of you is master of the Christians, or doctor of the Church?' Philip answered: 'I am he whom thou seekest.' Bassus said: 'You have heard the law of the Emperor[2], who commands the Christians nowhere to assemble, to the end that the men of this sect in all the world may either return to the sacrifices, or die. Therefore whatsoever vessels there are with you, of gold or

[1] The MSS. have *non alios patiabatur* to *non alio se paticbatur. abscedere*: I think we should correct it

[2] i. e. Galerius.

of silver or of whatsoever metal, or of skilful work, writings also whereby you either read or teach, fetch them that we may examine them with authority: else, if you shall think fit to demur, you shall be tortured until you do these things.' To these words holy Philip answered eloquently: 'If, as thou sayest, our torments give thee pleasure, our heart is ready to bear them: therefore that weak body, over which thou hast power, tear it in pieces with what cruelty thou wilt. Only ascribe not to thyself any power over my soul. But those vessels which thou demandest, whatsoever there are with us, thou shalt have them at once: for these things we easily despise when we are forced of you, for we worship not God with precious metal, but with fear, nor can the ornament of the Church please Christ any better than the ornament of the heart. But the Writings neither is it seemly for thee to receive, nor for me to give[1].'

"At these words of the holy martyr the President commanded the torturers to be brought in at once. Then entered Mucapor, a creature without a touch of nature in him and with no knowledge of human feeling. The President then ordered the priest Severus to be brought into court: and when he could not easily be found, he gave instructions for Philip to be maltreated. But as he was being visited with a long and grievous punishment, holy Hermes, who was standing close by, said: 'Though thou shouldest take at our hand all our Writings, dread inquisitor, so that there should appear no traces at all of this true tradition anywhere in the whole world, yet our descendants, taking thought for the memory of their fathers, and for their own souls, will compose and write greater volumes, and will teach yet more

[1] I fear now the tendency would be to reverse this order.

strenuously the fear that we ought to pay to Christ.' This said, he entered (but not till he had been scourged a great while), where all the vessels and the Scriptures lay hid. Then followed him Publius, the President's assessor, a man eager to thieve and in bondage to the love of robbery. So when this clever purloiner was taking off some of the vessels on the inventory, not knowing the punishment in store for him, when Hermes told him not to make the attempt, he bruised Hermes' face, and even stained it with not a little blood. When Bassus knew the case, and saw Hermes' face, he was wroth with Publius and ordered Hermes to be looked to. The vessels that were in the inventory, and all the Writings, he ordered to be given over to the police. Philip and the rest he ordered to be led, escorted by guards on either side, into the market-place, that the sight might do the people good and terrify all the rest who refused to obey.

"And while these were going to the forum, the President gave all the Scriptures to the soldiers to carry. Then he started with great speed for the palace, desiring to strip the Churches of all the worshippers that were to be found anywhere. The roof also of the Lord's House itself was spoiled, all the ornamental tiles being thrown down. The men also who did the work were forced with the lash, to make them less backward to pull it down." The Bibles were all burned on a great bonfire in the forum[1].

The ensuing part of the story reveals the working of the second of the edicts which we are now tracing. While the flames of the burning volumes went up, the earnest Prelate addressed the pagans and the Jews (of whom there were large numbers in Thrace and Macedonia) in a long and

[1] Ruinart, p. 364.

learned sermon, warning them that the end of the world was drawing near, and that none but the righteous could be saved. Meanwhile the ministers of the heathen temples had entered the forum, with preparations for a feast in honour of the idols. Hermes the deacon saw what would follow, and told the Bishop that they were to be polluted with these meats. Philip answered, 'The Lord's will be done.' Presently Bassus came into the forum in state, attended by an immense throng of every age and sex. "Then, as is always the case with a rabble, some were greatly distressed at the affliction of the saints, others were inflamed with a great folly so that they said that *all* the servants of God ought to be forced to sacrifice[1],—the Jews, however, were foremost, according to the account given in the Scriptures: 'they sacrificed unto devils, and not to God.'" At last the President said to Philip: 'Offer a victim to the deity.' Philip replied, 'How can I, a Christian, worship stones?' Bassus said, 'It is quite proper to pay sacrifices to our Lords.' Philip answered, 'We are taught to obey our betters, and to pay homage to the Emperors, but not worship.' Bassus said, 'At any rate sacrifice to the tutelary of the city: you see how beautiful, how smiling she is, how affably she admits all the people to do her homage.' Philip replied, 'You naturally are pleased with what you worship; but I cannot be led away from honouring Heaven by human art.' 'Surely,' said the President, 'you might feel some emotion at the sight of the Hercules before you, so colossal, yet so exquisite.' He only drew upon himself a keen harangue upon the vanity of stocks. Bassus, admiring his constancy, turned to Hermes; but Hermes said, 'I never sacrifice: I am a Christian.'

[1] Shewing plainly that the Fourth Edict was not yet published.

'What is your rank?' asked the judge. 'I am a senator,' he said, 'and I follow my master in everything.' Bassus caught at the suggestion. 'If Philip will be induced to sacrifice, will you follow his authority?' Hermes answered, 'I should not follow him,—nor will he be persuaded.' The President said presently, 'Do but sacrifice, not to the gods, but to our Lords the Emperors: just say, *All hail our sovereigns!*' Hermes turned to the Bishop, and said, 'We are fast approaching life.' As they were being led from the court some rough soldiers, who were standing by, struck the aged Prelate so that he fell upon the floor. The humane Bassus, for form's sake, sent the holy culprits for a few days into the prison; but soon gave them a comfortable residence in the house of a private man named Pancras, near the jail, where they were allowed to preach and hold service to their heart's content. They had already given up the ecclesiastical property in obedience to the First Edict;—the Second Edict only ordered their incarceration; and so they remained until Bassus' term of office expired, and a fiercer President arrived, appointed by Galerius, and armed with a new and bloodier decree. The lenity of Bassus is easily accounted for, when we hear that for many years past his wife had been a devoted disciple of the Church, and must again and again have received the Bread of Life at Philip's hands[1].

The very first thing in this splendid history which strikes the Christian reader is the wide difference of temper between these enlightened believers, and their more headstrong brethren in Numidia. Though St Philip and his brethren were

[1] Act. S. Phil. c. 8: *haec res* (Bassus' supersession) *fratres uehementer afficit. mitior enim uerat Bassus, et ratione sibi reddita uincebatur, eo quod uxor eius Deo aliquanto iam tempore seruiebat.*

ready to die, and afterwards did die, in defence of the faith, they yet thought themselves at liberty in the end to give up even the Books. There was no hesitation whatever about abandoning the Chalices. About them there was nothing *intrinsically* holy: they were but hallowed,—like the gold of the Temple, or the gift on the Altar. This same distinction indeed was drawn even at Cirta. Two golden and six silver Chalices, as well as the less sacred *ministeria*, silver lamps and candlesticks and kettles, vestments of various sorts, even down to forty-seven pair of women's clogs and nineteen ploughmen's smocks,—all were readily tossed out upon the floor[1]. But even that poor traditor[2] who afterwards (by a curious irony) helped to consecrate the first Donatist Bishop, even he would not willingly give up the sacred books. These were holy in themselves. The Scriptures are to us like a homely Shechinah ever present. There is scarcely anything so bold in all Christian literature as the superb liberality of thought which could dare to think of a new and greater Bible, when our present should be erased from the memory of the world. The erasure would only prove that He who gave the first revelation, now deemed the world ripe for a still fuller. Other traditors were poltroons: but Hermes, as much a traditor as any, soars above all calumny or criticism, by the majestic loftiness of his conception.

IV. While it is impossible to discover any special characteristics in the persecution as it developed in the territory of Galerius, the persecution in the East is strongly marked with a political type. The ecclesiastical buildings were

[1] See the *Gesta apud Zenophilum*. Patens for the Bread apparently were not invented at the time. The shoes and so forth were for the benefit of the poor,—the primitive clothing-club.

[2] The term *traditor* was applied to those who surrendered *any* kind of Church property.

indeed destroyed, throughout the whole of Diocletian's dominion. Eusebius saw it done, as well as the books burned[1]. At any rate the larger Churches were so treated, notably the great metropolitan Church of Tyre, which made way for so magnificent a successor under Constantine[2]. Smaller Chapels,—the *Martyria* and *Confessiones*,—were occasionally closed, and more or less carefully watched[3]. But though these provisions of Diocletian's law appear to have been exactly carried into execution, they are not (as in Africa) the central point of interest. No schism of Donatists was formed in the East to perpetuate the memory of the burning of the books. The name of *traditor* found no Greek equivalent. The history of the oriental persecution hinges upon the *third* portion of the First Edict, and upon the Second Edict,—namely, upon that part of the law which was directed against the *personnel* of the Church. And here we are met full by the difficulty mentioned above, that we possess scarcely anything but accounts of those who *died* under the persecution; which means, that in almost all the cases we know the regular working of the edicts was interrupted, that the law was violated by either the persecutor or the persecuted; either the governor exceeded his powers, or else the prisoner was guilty of treason. This latter case was particularly common.

However, so far as we are able to judge, the law seems to have been fairly administered. One mode, in which some judges tried to ensure the forfeiture of all legal rights by Christians, was to keep small altars continually in the law-courts, and to insist upon all litigants performing sacrifices

[1] Eus. hist. eccl. VIII. ii. 1.

[2] Eus. hist. eccl. X. iv.

[3] See the *Acts of St Theodotus* in the Appendix.

at them, before they could obtain justice:—going to claim legal redress was tantamount to going straight into the idol temples[1].

If we look for examples of persons in high office forfeiting not only rank, but also all rights of citizenship, we have not far to go. Torture was illegal for Roman citizens, yet almost all the martyrs suffered torture before they died. Of St Philip of Heraclea and his two priests it was distinctly said, that they had 'alienated from themselves even the name and style of Romans.' And in that most important passage in Eusebius' Life of Constantine, which contains his florid rescript to the governors of Palestine[2], we find persons of distinction treated in three ways. Some had been simply banished, or with the further refinement of being banished into islands,—a most aristocratic form of penalty; these favoured few seem to have incurred *no* civil disabilities. Some endured that *temporary* kind of *infamia* which was implied in becoming *addicti* of the local senates of colonies, of which (in many cases) they themselves had once been ornaments[3]: all their lands and goods, as well as their personal labour, being for the time at the disposal of these bodies. Some had fared worse yet, for their civil rights had been *entirely* taken away, so that they could not be called possessors of a single *denarius*, and these led a most dejected life, digging or begging about the scenes of their past prosperity, without any hope of restoring it in the future by their industry. It mattered not to their

[1] Lact. mort. 15: *ne cui temere ius diceretur, arae in secretariis ac pro tribunali positae, ut litigatores prius sacrificarent atque ita causas suas dicerent: a diis ad iudices tamquam ad deos adiretur.*

[2] Eus. uit. Const. II. xxx.

[3] Valesius, in commenting on the passage, misunderstands an *οὐ* for a *μή*. The word *τούτων* represents *καταλόγων*.

punishment whether their distinctions were military or civil, as will be seen by the story of the three Cilician nobles given below. Of course, with their other rights, they lost also that of bequeathing property: their children were as penniless as they.

But what is even more important to notice will be found in the thirty-fourth chapter of the second book of Constantine's Life. In our account of the edict, we have stated that all private Christians were to be reduced to slavery. This passage proves the point. It shews us clearly that some, who were not only of free but of illustrious origin[1], were cast down below the level of *infames* to downright slavery. The student must keep fast in his hand this clue:—it was official position, not birth, which made the difference between this class and the former. They became slaves of the *fiscus*[2], —the official property, that is, of the Emperor. If they were not wanted for the tilling of his fields, or the building of his sumptuous palaces, they were sold to any that would buy them. Many became involuntary operatives in large linen factories; some in the service of baking companies. Others, whose looks suggested that refined and literary tastes had incapacitated them for coarse and menial work, were sent by their owners into those parts of the house, where the handmaids plied their tasks under the mistress's eye, to help in the spinning and the weaving.

[1] Eus. uit. Const. II. xxx. 1: *τῆς εὐγενείας πρὸς βίαν στερόμενοι...οὐδὲν αὐτοῖς τῆς προτέρας ἐπαρκεσάσης γενέσεως.* Presently after, speaking of the same persons, *αἰφνίδιον οἰκέτην ἑαυτὸν ἀντ' ἐλευθέρου γνούς.*

[2] Id. ib.: *οἰκέται τοῦ ταμιείου.* This, which has not been noticed before, makes it quite certain that Diocletian's law was carefully adapted from Valerian's: see p. 114. Perhaps the banishments also, of which (to our knowledge) Diocletian's law specifies nothing, were imposed after the precedent set by Valerian in dealing with the Christian ladies.

In these cases we see clearly the law of 303 acting steadily and undisturbed. Eusebius gives us to understand that there were 'vast numbers' of Christians, even of Clergymen, who helped to carry it regularly into effect, by obeying its commands and renouncing Christianity. But he gives us also, twice over[1], a vivid but not too highly-coloured picture of the way in which Satan tried to persuade himself that he was conquering, when he really failed. Naturally, it was a point of honour with the rulers to make as many yield as possible. Victory was sweeter than punishment. Some of the scenes we find presented to us in the Epistles of St Cyprian were represented at Caesarea. Sometimes officious friends of the Christian culprit cried out that he had already sacrificed, and if he held his peace, the magistrates did not care to inquire further. At other times, men and women were dragged by violence to the altar, and the unholy thing was put in their hands; and though they screamed their loathing and rejection of the act, they were judged by their unwilling deed, not by their free words. Or again the mangled frames of those, who had been tortured till they could not stand, were dragged along the ground to that side of the court where stood the miserable runagates. If any of these could gather voice to profess himself a Christian, the soldiers slapped him on the mouth and stopped the word from being uttered. Eusebius speaks of these things to exemplify the barbarity, as well as the folly, of the officers. In many cases, however, the motive may have been not so much the dislike of being beaten by the constancy of the confessors, as a real desire to save them from the miseries of a rigorous application of the law.

[1] Eus. hist. eccl. VIII. iii., mart. Pal. ii.

Even for a man to carry a few scars upon his ribs, or to suffer some hours of torturous tension, was not so grave a thing as to die a slave in a foreign land, while his children begged about the streets.

All the martyrdoms which Eusebius himself witnessed in this year are political, and may be attributed to the unguardedness of the Christians themselves. The magistrates were undoubtedly on the alert to detect any signs of disaffection to the government[1]. Two Clergymen, Alphaeus and Zacchaeus, died at Caesarea for shocking the Proconsul by saying bluffly that they acknowledged but One God, and Jesus as the anointed Emperor[2]. A layman, Procopius, the first martyr whose death Eusebius saw with his eyes, when told to sacrifice to the gods, answered that there was but One God to whom it was right to offer sacrifice,—in the way He wished: then being urged at least to pour a health to the four Emperors, he replied with Homer's well-known political verses:

> "It is not good to have lords many:
> Let One be Lord,—One King."

Of course the pagan judge could not see the superb turn which our faith put upon the passage, and perceived in it only a disapproval of Diocletian's admirable system. Anxious as he appears to have been to spare the Christians, he could not possibly spare the treasonable. Procopius' immediate death, by decapitation, shews that this was the view the

[1] Burckhardt, p. 341: *doch kann man sich auch des Gedankens nicht erwehren, dass die Richter einen politischen Process vor sich zu haben glaubten.* What he says generally of the whole empire is true only of the part.

[2] Eus. mart. Pal. ii. 5: Χριστὸν βασιλέα Ἰησοῦν,—βασιλεύς of course now being the Greek for Emperor.

judge actually took[1]. In our deep sympathy with the sufferings and glories of our own beloved brethren the martyrs, we sometimes lose sight of the sympathy we ought to feel towards the magistrates who sentenced them; men, often not only honourable and loyal, but gentle and kindhearted, who endured with a patience which astounds us more than that of the martyrs,—inasmuch as it was grounded only on human not Divine strength,—insults and revilings and personal defiance at the mouths of the Christians, foolish allegorical answers to plain questions about name and birthplace, sometimes long and exasperating sermons.

The only other sentence of death recorded by Eusebius in the first year of the persecution (November 17, 303) is full of instruction. The terrible Galerius was superintending the work at Antioch. In his appalling presence, though there was no legal need as yet for men to sacrifice until they were accused, crowds of terrified believers streamed to the temples to put themselves at once beyond the reach of accusation. Romanus, a deacon and exorcist of Caesarea[2], who happened to be on the spot, was stirred with indignation at the spectacle, and openly and loudly rebuked them for their sin. He was haled before the judge. That minister of justice, acting under the eye of the Caesar, felt called upon to go beyond the law, and sentenced him to the flames. Romanus was tied to the stake, and the faggots were piled round him. Everything was ready, but the judge had thought fit to send up to the palace for Galerius' confirmation of the sentence. The Deacon waxed impatient, and called out repeatedly: 'Where is my fire? where is my fire?' But

[1] Eus. mart. Pal. i. 1.

[2] Eus. mart. Pal. ii. 1. Somehow he had evaded the action of the Second Edict.

death was not a penalty under the statute of Diocletian. No edict having been yet issued to compel all Christians to idolatry, Romanus had done nothing distinctly treasonable by dissuading them. Galerius, thus directly appealed to, was obliged to countermand the illegal order. He substituted a more cruel, though less showy, punishment. The unfortunate person's tongue was cut to the roots[1], and he was put in prison according to the terms of the Second Edict. These are the facts which Eusebius records, but without noticing the counter-effects, of Galerius' bloody personality, and of his impotence to go beyond the laws of Diocletian. Galerius was not the only person in the world who approved of his subordinates breaking state-laws, which from his high official position he durst not break himself.

The general legality and moderation of the persecution in the eastern half of the world, during the first year of the Church's outlawry, is attested by the fact that there is but one other genuine *Passio* preserved from these regions that seems probably to belong to that date[2]. The Acts of Tarachus, Probus, and Andronicus have not been altered since the day when Sebastus, the magistrate's heathen clerk at Anazarbus, made out a second fair copy of them for the Christians of the place to send away to Iconium, for a price of two hundred denarii. They are well worth reading,

[1] The untrustworthy Acts of St Romanus (Ruinart, p. 315), Prudentius peri steph. x., and St Chrysostom, orat. xliii., say that he spoke equally well without it. The Hon. E. Twisleton, defending the analogous 'miracle' upon the Confessors of Tiposa, proves the fact physiologically. (*The Tongue not essential to Speech*, Murray, 1873.)

[2] It is the date given in the colophon at the end, and though some points at first seem to indicate a later date, yet on the whole the position of affairs seems precisely analogous to that which appears in other documents of about the date and from the same region, e.g. the *Passio S. Hieronis*.

for they shew exactly the kind of procedure which was followed (we may suppose) by most oriental judges in their trials of Christians, and the kind of answers which the prisoners were apt to give. Many of the points remind the reader of what we observed in the last chapter as being the state of affairs in the upper parts of Asia Minor.

The first trial takes place at Tarsus, St Paul's birthplace. Maximus the President asks Tarachus his name: the answer is, 'A Christian:' the President bids them strike him on the jaw and say, 'Do not make crooked answers.' To the inquiry about his station in life, he replies that he is of military rank, a Roman by race, and that he chose to retire from the army because he was a Christian. Maximus said, 'Yes, you were not worthy to be in the army: but who gave you leave?' Tarachus said that he had asked and obtained leave of Publion the tribune. When offered the kind notice of the Emperors, the man replied that the Emperors were grievously mistaken and deceived by Satan. This elicited some more rough blows, but the old man persisted that they were men and not infallible. Presently he spoke about a *law*, by which he was bound to disobey the imperial orders, completely puzzling the judge,—and still more so when he tried to explain that to worship God and Christ was not a form of polytheism. The centurion who was ordered to thrash him with rods, sympathizing with his fellow-soldier, tried to persuade him to sacrifice, but was rebuked as 'a minister of Satan.' The answers of his two comrades are precisely in the same vein, except that Andronicus, being a young man of a sharp temper, answers with considerable sauciness.

In the second trial, which occurred some weeks later

at Mopsuestia, both sides become much exasperated. Maximus invents strange torments for his prisoners, putting mustard and salt in their nostrils, and hot cinders upon their heads. Tarachus urges the President 'and *his* Emperors' to put away the blindness of their hearts: Probus pronounced an imprecation upon all idolaters, especially upon his judge. When young Andronicus, who had not been present at his brethren's confession, was led into court, the judge tried a new trick. 'I am sorry for you,' he said: 'the men who preceded you passed through innumerable torments before we could persuade them to pay reverence to the gods, but they did so at last, and are to receive important preferment from the Emperors. Now, you take my advice, and get off your tortures into the bargain; for I swear by the gods and by the invincible Emperors, I shall put you to extraordinary pains.' The youth burst forth: 'Miserable liar! why do you try to deceive me? Nothing could make the confessors who went before me abjure their hopes in our God. I do not know your gods, and I fear neither you nor the tribunal on which you sit.' For once we may speak of the horrors of an oriental law-court. The judge ordered them to bind the poor youth hand and foot to four stakes and lash his back with thongs of raw hide: Andronicus said, 'Surely this is not what you threatened! is this all that you can do?' One of the apparitors said to him, 'Your whole body is one great wound, my poor lad, and do you call that nothing?' Andronicus said, 'Those who love the Living God do not care for these things.' Maximus said, 'Rub his back with salt.' Andronicus replied with a sally of wit worthy of St Lawrence or Sir Thomas More: 'We shall want more

salt than that, if I am to keep.' The President bad them turn him over and give him the bastinado on the belly, so as to open the wounds he had received at the former trial. 'You wounded me before,' said the young man, 'and yet, as you saw, my body was quite sound again: He who tended me then, will heal me again.' Maximus turned angrily upon his men: 'Did I not tell you, rascally soldiers, that no one was to go to him or nurse him, that when his wounds began to fester he might do as he was bid?' Pegasius the turnkey said, 'By your excellency's worship, no one nursed him, no one went in to him: he was kept in chains in the inmost ward: if you find I am lying, I have a head, and you are my master.' Maximus said, 'How is it then that his wounds do not shew?' The turnkey said he could not tell: but Andronicus knew. 'Fool,' he said, 'our Physician is a great Physician, and He heals those who reverence God, not by applying poultices and plasters, but by His word alone. Heaven is His home, but He is with us everywhere, whom you, senseless person, do not acknowledge.' Maximus began to threaten him viciously. Andronicus replied, 'Once and again I have said the same thing. I am not a mere boy. By this time perhaps you begin partly to see, President, that we are not afraid of you or your torments.'

The account of the third trial is so characteristic of the Asiatic persecution, that it seems wrong not to give it whole.

Maximus. Are you willing, Tarachus, now, in this respite from scourging, to give up your impudent profession? Come and sacrifice to the gods, by whom all things consist. *Tarachus.* Is it good for you, or for them either, that the universe should be governed by them, for whom is prepared

the fire and eternal punishment; and not for them only, but for all you who do their will? *Max.* Stop your blasphemy, foul-mouthed fellow; do you think that such effrontery will gain you your end by making me cut your head off at once and release you? *Tar.* If I were to die quickly, it would be no great trial; but now do precisely what you will, that the excellence of my conflict in the Lord may be increased. *Max.* You have suffered no more than other classes of prisoners who are tortured by the laws. *Tar.* This is another proof of your folly and gross blindness, that you do not see that the workers of wickedness endure these things justly, but they who suffer for Christ's sake obtain a reward from Him. *Max.* Foul scoundrel, what reward do you receive after you die a miserable death? *Tar.* You have no right even to ask about it, nor may you learn the recompense that is in store for us. That is why we tolerate your senseless threats. *Max.* Scoundrel, is that how you speak to me, as if you were my equal in position? *Tar.* I am not in your position, but I pray God I never may be; yet I have liberty to speak, and no one can stop me, through God which strengtheneth me by Christ. *Max.* I'll *cut* that liberty out of you, you ruffian. *Tar.* No one can take away my liberty, neither you, nor your Emperors, nor your father Satan, nor the devils whom you misguidedly worship. *Max.* My talking with you flatters you to play the fool, scapegrace. *Tar.* You have only yourself to blame: for my God whom I serve knows that I abominate the very face of you, and certainly I never wished to answer you. *Max.* Come now, consider what it would be to be released from tortures, and sacrifice. *Tar.* Both in my first confession at Tarsus, and in my second examination at Mopsuestia like-

wise, I confessed that I was a Christian; and now here I am still the identical person. Take my advice and recognise that as true. *Max.* Unhappy wretch, what good will it be repenting, when once I have killed you with tortures? *Tar.* If I had meant to repent, I should have been afraid of your first and your second stripes, and should have done your will: but now I am established, and care not for you in the Lord: do what you please, most impudent man. *Max.* I have made you impudent by not punishing you more severely. *Tar.* I said before, and say again, you have my body in your power: do what you please. *Max.* Bind him and hang him up, to stop his foolery. *Tar.* If I had been a fool, I should have joined in your impieties along with you. *Max.* Now that you are strung up, take good advice, before you get your deserts. *Tar.* Although you are not permitted to proceed to extremities with my body, and it is illegal thus to torment a man of military rank[1], yet I do not ask you to desist from your madness. Do as you please. *Max.* A soldier is always rewarded for his religion, when he honours the gods and the Augusti, with largesses and promotions; but you were most irreligious, and were given a dishonourable discharge, therefore I order you to be worse tortured. *Tar.* Do what you please. I have asked you to do so a great many times. Why are you so very slow? *Max.* Do not think (as I said before) that I am so fond of you as to dis-

[1] Baronius (ann. 290, § 19) quotes — though I do not know where he gets it — a rescript from Diocletian to one Sallust, which is probably referred to here: *Milites neque tormentis neque plebeiorum poenis in causis criminum subici concedimus; etiam si non emeritis stipendiis uideantur esse dimissi; exceptis iis scilicet, qui ignominiose sunt soluti, quod et in filiis militum ueteranorum seruabitur.* Of course the rescript is not concerned with Christian soldiers; in fact they would be definitely excluded from the benefit by the First Edict.

miss you from life in an instant. I shall execute you bit by bit, and throw the remains to the wild beasts. *Tar.* What you do, do quickly: do not make promises without keeping them. *Max.* Villain, you think that after death your body will be looked to by some silly women and anointed with spices: but I shall take order with regard to that, that your remains shall disappear. *Tar.* I give you leave to torture me before I die, and when I am dead to treat me as you like. *Max.* Come and sacrifice, I say, to the gods. *Tar.* I told you once for all, stupid man, that I neither sacrifice to your gods nor worship your abominations. *Max.* Take hold of his cheeks and rip his mouth open. *Tar.* You have marred and disfigured my face, but it only refreshes my soul the more. *Max.* Wretched creature, you exasperate me to behave very differently towards you. *Tar.* Do not think to frighten me with words. I am a match for you, while I wear the armour of God. *Max.* Curse you, what armour have you on, naked as you are, and all over wounds? speak. *Tar.* You do not understand these things. You are blind and cannot see my panoply. *Max.* I put up with all your ravings. For all your provoking answers, I shall not dismiss you summarily from your body. *Tar.* What harm have I spoken in saying that you cannot see that which is about me, not being pure in heart but most wicked and a foe of the servants of God? *Max.* I understand that you have long lived a bad life and as you stand before the tribunal they tell me you are a sorcerer. *Tar.* I never was so, nor am now, for I do not serve devils as you do, but God who gives me patience and prompts me with the word that I shall speak unto you. *Max.* They will do you no good, these words of yours. Sacrifice, and

be rid of your tortures. *Tar.* Do you take me for such a senseless fool as not to trust God and live for ever, but to trust you and get bodily relief for an hour and slay my soul for ever and ever? *Max.* Heat spits, and put them to his breasts. *Tar.* Even if you do more than this, you will never make God's servant yield and worship the figures of your devils. *Max.* Bring a razor and take his ears off, and shave his head and heap redhot coals upon it. *Tar.* My ears are gone, but my heart hears as well as ever. *Max.* Take all the skin off his cursed head with the razor and put the coals to it. *Tar.* If you order my whole body to be skinned, I shall not leave my God who empowers me to endure your weapons of wickedness. *Max.* Take the hot irons and put them under his armpits. *Tar.* God look upon you and judge you this day. *Max.* Curse you, what God do you call upon? speak out. *Tar.* One who is near us and you recognise Him not, and who will give to each man according to his works. *Max.* I will not kill you simply, so that, as I said, they may wrap your relics in linen and whimper over them and worship them; but I give you a horrible death, and order your body to be burnt, and I shall scatter the ashes about. *Tar.* As I said before so say I now, do what you please: you have received power in this world. *Max.* Let him be taken back into the jail and kept for to-morrow's wild-beast fight. Bring the next.

Demetrius (the centurion). He stands before you, my lord, if you please. *Max.* You have reflected and given yourself good advice, Probus, not to fall into the same horrors which you yourself sometime ago endured, and which that unfortunate wretch who just went of court has now endured. I do believe and am convinced of this, that you,

like a wise fellow as you are, have changed your mind and are willing to sacrifice, that you may be honoured by us and accepted as a devout worshipper of the gods. Draw near and do so. *Pro.* We have but one way of arguing, President; for both Tarachus and I serve God. Do not think you will hear anything from me but what you have heard and learnt already: it will be of no use to punish me, nor will you persuade me by threatening, nor unman my courage by your blustering talk. Even this day I stand before you braver than I was, and despise your fury. Why then do you wait, madman? why do you not make bare your madness? *Max.* Have you agreed together to be irreligious and deny the gods? *Pro.* You have spoken the truth; for once you have not lied, habitual liar though you are; for we did conspire together both in our religion and our contest and our confession: wherefore we withstand your malice in the Lord. *Max.* Before you meet with uglier treatment at my hands, reflect, and put away this sort of foolery. Pity yourself. Obey me as if I were your father and pay reverence to the gods. *Pro.* I see that you believe nothing at all, President: but believe me when I confirm by oath my good confession toward God, that neither you, nor your devils which you deludedly worship, nor they who gave you this power over us, will be able to turn aside our faith and affection toward God. *Max.* Bind him and gird him, and then hang him up by his toes. *Pro.* Will you not cease your impiety, most wicked tyrant, contending thus on behalf of devils like yourself? *Max.* Take my advice before you suffer. Spare your own body. You see what horrors lie before you. *Pro.* All that you do to me is good for my soul; therefore do what you wish. *Max.* Heat the

spits redhot and put them to his sides, to stop his folly. *Pro.* The more fool you think me, the more prudent I am to God. *Max.* Heat the spits again and put them well into his back. *Pro.* My body is at your service. May God from heaven see my humiliation and my patience, and judge between me and you. *Max.* Wretched creature, the God you call upon has Himself abandoned you to suffer thus, as your choice deserved. *Pro.* My God is a lover of man, and wishes no harm to any man; but each man knows what is for his own good, and has his free will and power to act upon his own calculation. *Max.* Pour some wine upon him off the altar and put the meat into his mouth. *Pro.* Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, behold from Thy holy height this violence, and give sentence with me. *Max.* You have suffered a great deal, wretched man, and yet see you have tasted of the altar; what can you do now? *Pro.* You have not gained much by forcibly pouring over me, as best you could, against my will, the unclean things of your sacrifices, for God knows my will. *Max.* Stupid fool, you both ate and drank. Promise to do it for yourself, and you shall be taken down out of your chains. *Pro.* It would do you no good, law-breaker, to overcome my confession. Know that if you were to empty all your unclean meats at once upon me, you will do me no harm, for God in heaven sees the violence I endure. *Max.* Heat the spits, and run them into his shins. *Pro.* Neither your fire, nor your tortures, nor (as I have told you many times) your father Satan, will persuade God's servant to abandon the confession of the true God. *Max.* There is not a morsel of your body still sound, poor wretch, and do you not yet understand? *Pro.* For this very purpose

I gave my body up to you, that my soul might remain sound and unspotted. *Max.* Heat some sharp nails hot, and pierce his hands. *Pro.* Glory to Thee, Lord Jesu Christ, who hast deigned even to let my hands be nailed for Thy Name's sake! *Max.* So much pain is beginning to make you still more foolish, Probus. *Pro.* So much power, and such immeasurable malice, O Maximus, have made you not foolish only but blind: for you do, you know not what. *Max.* Foul blasphemer, how dare you call me foolish and blind, while I am contending for the religion of the gods? *Pro.* O that you were blind in your eyes and not in your heart; for now thinking that you see, you are but gazing in the darkness. *Max.* Vile wretch, with your whole body maimed, do you mean to accuse me because I have still left your eyes unhurt? *Pro.* Even if through your cruelty my eyes should no longer be in my body, yet the eyes in my heart cannot be blinded by men. *Max.* I shall put out your eyes, idiot, and then torture you. *Pro.* Do not promise and leave it unperformed; you cannot frighten the servant of God. Do it indeed: you will not hurt me, for you cannot injure my unseen eye. *Max.* Thrust his eyes out, that though he has not long to live, he may lack the light. *Pro.* There; you have taken away my bodily eyes, but, O most cruel tyrant, I defy you to deprive me of my living eye. *Max.* Can you talk so well in the dark, wretch? *Pro.* If thou knewest the darkness that was in thee, most ungodly man, thou wouldest call me blessed. *Max.* You are nothing but a corpse, you villain, and will you not stop this rant? *Pro.* So long as the spirit stays in me, I shall not cease to speak in God who enables me through Christ. *Max.* After all these torments, do you expect still

to live? You may be sure that I shall not even leave you to do your dying for yourself. *Pro.* To this end I contend and wrestle with thee, accursed man, that my good confession may be made perfect, and that I may die, howsoever it be, at thy hands, thou pitiless hater of men. *Max.* I shall destroy you bit by bit with stripes, as you deserve. *Pro.* You have the power, overbearing servitor of tyrants. *Max.* Take him away, and chain him with iron chains, and keep guard over him in the jail, that none of their gang may come in and make much of them for having persisted in their impiety before me; for I mean him after the assize to be given to the beasts. Now bring the ruffian Andronicus.

Demetrius. He is before you, if you please, my lord. *Max.* Andronicus, have you even now taken pity upon the prime of your youth, and given yourself sage advice to reverence the gods? or do you still observe the same mad rule as before? It will do you no good, I assure you. Unless you will hear me and sacrifice to the gods, and also pay the honour to the Emperors which is needful, you will get no consolation and no pity from me. So draw near and sacrifice. *And.* No good come to you, enemy and alien to all truth, that most shameless of all beasts, a tyrant! I have endured all your threats; and now do you think to persuade me to break the law in the way that you impiously, with your tortures, urge on the servants of God? Nay, you shall never weaken my confession of God; for in the Lord I stand and wrestle with your most barbarous devices, and I will shew you that my mind's wisdom is yet full of youth and strength. *Max.* I believe you are mad and have a devil. *And.* If I had a devil, I should have obeyed you; but now, not having a devil, I will not obey: but you wholly

and entirely *are* a devil, and do devil's work. *Max.* The men who preceded you spoke very freely, just like you, until they were tortured; but afterwards they were persuaded by the severity of the punishments to be reverent to the gods, and have come to the right decision about the Augusti, and have poured to their healths, and are saved. *And.* It is quite in keeping with your wicked mind to lie, for the things which you deludedly worship do not stand in the truth: for you are a liar like your father. Wherefore God will judge you shortly, minister of Satan and of all the devils. *Max.* Let Him,—if I do not treat you as a thorough ruffian and bring down your lustihood. *And.* I shall fear neither you nor your threats in the name of my God. *Max.* Bring some paper and twist it into wisps, and light it and hold it to his belly. *And.* If I should be wholly consumed by you and my breath could still be in me, you would not beat me, accursed tyrant; for the God whom I serve is at my side, enabling me. *Max.* How long will you be fool enough to refuse? I wish you would at least die in your senses. *And.* So long as I live, I will confound your wickedness. I am eager to be entirely destroyed by you, for that is my boast in God. *Max.* Bring the spits redhot and run them in between his fingers. *And.* Dull fool, and enemy of God, brimfull of all devices of Satan, when you see my body all inflamed with your tortures, do you still think that I am afraid of your devices? I have *within me* the God whom I serve: through Jesus Christ I despise you. *Max.* Ignorant dunce! do you not know that the man whom you are invoking was a certain common felon, and once upon a time under the authority of a President named Pilate, was fastened on a gibbet, of which occurrence there are Acts preserved?

And. Be dumb, accursed spirit! thou art forbidden to say this: for thou art not worthy to speak of Him, most wicked man. If thou hadst the bliss to be worthy, thou wouldest not be dealing wickedly with the servants of God. But now, being alienated from hope on Him, thou hast not only lost thine own soul, but art trying to force them that are His, thou transgressor! *Max.* What will you gain, you idiot, by 'faith' and 'hope' in that felon Christ of whom you speak? *And.* I have gained much already, and shall gain more; that is why I endure all this. *Max.* I do not mean to use instruments of torture and make short work with you; but you shall be given to the beasts, and shall slowly die watching your members one by one devoured by them. *And.* Why, are not you fiercer than all other beasts, and more horrible than all other manslayers, because you have punished men who have done no wrong, and are not accused of doing any wrong, as if they were murderers? Therefore, I serve my God in Christ,—I do not deprecate your threats. Bring any instrument that you think most formidable, and you shall find that I can play the man. *Max.* Open his mouth, and thrust meat off the altar into it, and pour wine into it. *And.* O Lord my God, behold the violence they do me. *Max.* What can you do now, my fine fellow? you would not reverence nor sacrifice to them, and now you have eaten of their altars. *And.* O foolish and blind and senseless tyrant, you poured it upon me violently and in spite of me. God knows, who understands the reasons of things, who also is able to deliver me from the wrath of Satan and his ministers. *Max.* How long will you be a fool without understanding, and utter this unprofitable rant? *And.* I expect to reap the profit from God, and therefore I endure

all this; but you do not understand the things on which I gaze while I suffer. *Max.* How long will you be a fool? I shall crop your tongue, and then you *cannot* rant like this. You shew me that my forbearance has made you a greater fool than you were. *And.* I entreat you to do it:—pray cut well away the lips and the tongue on which you flatter yourself you laid your pollutions. *Max.* Madman, why do you still persevere in your punishments? see, as I said, you have actually tasted of these meats. *And.* Cursed be you, most bloody tyrant, and those who have given you this power, for touching me with your most abominable sacrifices: but *you* shall see what you have done against God's servant. *Max.* Do you dare to curse the Emperors, vile person,—the Emperors who have given so long and deep a peace to the world? *And.* I cursed them, and I will curse them again, for plagues and blood-bibbers, men who have turned the world upside down; and I pray that God with His immortal hand, not being longsuffering with them, may requite them for this their pastime, that they may know what they are doing to His servants. *Max.* Put an iron into his mouth, and knock out his teeth, and cut out his impudent blasphemous tongue, that he may learn not to blaspheme the Augusti; and burn the tongue and the teeth out of his accursed head, and reduce them to ashes, and sprinkle it about, for fear some silly women of the gang of this abominable religion should watch for them, and take them home, and preserve them as precious and holy things; and take the man himself, and deliver him over and keep him in the prison, that together with his villainous fellows he may be given to the beasts to-morrow.—And it was done so.

Of these three men, Andronicus at any rate was justly

condemned for his treasonable language. But even apart from the maledictions on the Emperors, what wonder, when an almost irresponsible proconsul's blood was up, that such stubborn confessions turned into illegal martyrdoms? That was what the sufferers coveted. "These Christ-wearing Martyrs," says St Phileas of Thmuis, in a passage studded with magnificent misquotations, "*coveting earnestly the best gifts,* endured every toil and all devices of shameful handling, some not once but twice; and though the Emperor's guards vied with each other against them with threatful words and deeds as well, they gave not in, because that *perfect love did cast out fear*[1]."

[1] ap. Eus. hist. eccl. VIII. x. 3: Routh, Rel. Sac. vol. IV. p. 88. St Phileas himself received the 'best gift' in 306 or so.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FOURTH EDICT, OR, THE PERSECUTION OF MAXIMIAN.

Churches and Altars fed him; Perjuries
Were Gnats and Flies.
It rain'd about him Blood and Tears, but he
Drank them as free.

HENRY VAUGHAN.

THE next clearly marked stage in our history occurs in the last month of the year which had inaugurated the persecution. According to Eusebius, St Romanus, who had been mutilated on the seventeenth of November, 303, had spent a very long and weary time in his dungeon[1]—for to a person in his condition a month might well appear so—when the birthday of Diocletian's reign came round, the twentieth anniversary of the day when Carus died so strangely in the far East[2]. No Emperor, since the dutiful and well-nigh

[1] Eus. mart. Pal. II. 4: πλεῖστόν τε αὐτόθι πονηθεὶς χρόνον: but he expressly states that he was executed before the year's end.

[2] The one bad ms. containing the Mortes of Lactantius says (c. 17) that the day of the Vicennalia was to be *a. d.* XII. *kal. Dec.* or Nov. 20. But for several reasons it is easiest to suppose that this is a slip, either in author or in copyist, for the following month. (1). The three days that would elapse between Romanus' mutilation, and the 20th of November, could hardly be called πλεῖστος χρόνος, but a month could; while it is unlikely that an edict of this sort would be delayed in its promulgation like the persecuting edicts. (2) Lactantius says that Diocletian would not wait to be invested consul on Jan. 1st, because he could not bear a residence of *thirteen days* at Rome, which seems to suit best with *a. d.* XII. *kal. Ian.* (3) By a perfect piece of

saintly successor of Hadrian, had been able to look back over so lengthy or so prosperous a reign. It had long been the custom, even at the lesser festivals of *Quinquennalia*, to extend the joy and thankfulness of the sovereign down to the very worst and meanest of the population. And now, when Diocletian was seeing the outgoing of a fourth lustrum, assuredly the custom was not interrupted. On the day of the winter solstice[1], the edict of the *Vicennalia* went forth as usual, commanding all the prison doors to be thrown open, and the malefactors released. But the amnesty was not so full and free as at other times; for by the action of the Second antichristian Edict, instead of the murderers and grave-thieves[2] who usually listened to the welcome proclamation, the dungeons were choked with Bishops and Priests, Deacons and Subdeacons, Readers and Exorcists. Such criminals were not to be let off so easily. Irritated as they might well be by their rigorous confinement, they might set themselves immediately at the head of the Christian conspiracy which a few months back had looked so formidable. A little note (which we call the Third Edict, because to Christian eyes it has worn the important aspect of an act of persecution,) was appended to the amnesty, to say that it applied even to these Clergymen, provided they would sacrifice: and that if they needed some encouragement to

good fortune, the dates of two rescripts in the Codex of Justinian (II. iii. 28, and IV. xix. 21) shew that Diocletian was *travelling westward* in December, which closes the discussion. The subject is worked out well in Hunziker, pp. 184 foll. I have brought nothing new to bear upon the point.

[1] Vogel apparently (from Hunziker *l. c.*) thinks the choice of the day a strong mark of Diocletian's superstition, but it is much simpler to believe that it was the historical anniversary.

[2] Eus. hist. eccl. VIII. vi. 9: *ἀνδροφόνοις καὶ τυμβωρύχοις.*

take advantage of it, any kind of torture might be thrown into the scale of freedom[1].

Dean Milman makes a mistake, however, in introducing his mention of this little codicil with a sentence which implies that it was an aggravation of the war now waging. "Edict followed Edict," he says, "rising in regular gradations of angry barbarity. The whole clergy were declared enemies of the State, and crowded into the prisons. A new rescript prohibited the liberation of any of these prisoners, unless they should consent to offer sacrifice[2]." He has taken the negative side, and exhibited it as the positive,—a process which in history, as well as in photography, converts white into black. He has made the prohibition the chief point, rather than the permission. The fact is that this clause of the decree of amnesty was intended as a special act of mercy to the Christian Church. It was a plain token that the Emperor believed the dangerous crisis to be nearly past[3]. The Prelates might now be safely restored to their widowed Churches. But the statute which made Christianity illegal was unrepealed:—the Church still needed to have the curb held firmly. It would have been a stultification of the policy which had condemned all private believers to slavery, if the professed ecclesiastics had been allowed to walk forth absolutely free. They must be requested to go through the form of sacrificing before leaving their present

[1] Eus. hist. eccl. VIII. vi. 10: *αὖθις δ' ἑτέρων τὰ πρῶτα γράμματα ἐπικατειληφότων, ἐν οἷς τοὺς κατακλείστους θύσαντας μὲν ἐᾶν βαδίζειν ἐπ' ἐλευθερίας, ἐνισταμένους δὲ μυρίαις καταξαίνειν προστέτακτο βασάνοις.* That this 'Third Edict' *was* the same as the clause in the vicennalian manifesto, is plain from the story of Romanus (mart. Pal. ii).

[2] Milm. *Hist. Chr.* II. 222.

[3] We have before observed (see above, p. 137), that the Second Edict has the appearance of a temporary precaution.

quarters. If they refused to pay the paternal Government this little courtesy in return for its kindness, they were to be in no worse case than before: not one was to be killed: now, as formerly, Diocletian would transact the whole business without blood. It was important, however, to liberate them[1]; and so the magistracy was advised to add to the natural desire of liberty the soft insinuations of the *eculeus* and the *ungulae;* but if they could resist these siren voices, nothing remained but to let them lodge where they were.

The prisons emptied with a distressing but natural rapidity[2]. Some doubtless sacrificed at once; many after torture. Probably governors who befriended our religion made the exit easy. Others who wanted to get the prisons emptied, devised means to turn many of them out. For it was no slight expense to the Roman government to be maintaining the entire clergy in jail. It was the first instance, in fact, of a state-supported hierarchy; and yet the State was not reaping any benefit from its expenditure. It is therefore possible to hope that not all who regained their temporal liberty, had fettered their consciences with sinful acquiescence. Some persons who were proof against torture, like St Romanus, were put to death,—of course illegally, unless they happened to speak treason[3]. Others, like the famous Bishop of Cordova, or Donatus to whom Lactantius dedicates

[1] Besides the reason of expense mentioned in the next paragraph, I believe that Diocletian saw the importance of reconciling the angry corporation again, and intended this amnesty to be the first step to a new act of toleration.

[2] Eus. hist. eccl. VIII. iii. 1: *μύριοι δ' ἄλλοι τὴν ψυχὴν ὑπὸ δειλίας προναρκήσαντες προχείρως οὕτως ἀπὸ πρώτης ἐξησθένησαν προσβολῆς*; and at Antioch Romanus was left the only man in the prison. This looks like plain dealing with the foibles of the Christians; yet Eusebius is accused of disingenuity!

[3] Romanus himself, however, died actually under torture, astride on the hobby-horse.

his book, were treated legally, and remained in their prisons, bearing through six long years the attacks of successive administrators who desired to be rid of them, until at last, like returning ghosts, they came again into the world of men, which was rejoicing in the remorseful death-anguish of Galerius[1].

But the publication of the so-called Third Edict was not the event which made this time so momentous to the world and to the Church. These Vicennalia rank among the most notable dates in history, for the reason that they virtually mark the close of Diocletian's reign. The great festival was to be held at the city which despite all Diocletian's innovations was still the focus of the earth. The aged and anxious Emperor came from Nicomedia to Rome through his native province of Illyria, so as to avoid the discomforts of the sea passage to Brindisi. It was a long and fatiguing journey, and he performed it very fast. On the third of December he was at Burtudixus, not far from Adrianople; on the eighth at Singidunum, now Belgrade[2]. He cannot have arrived at Rome before the fifteenth. As the high day was to be the twenty-first, the time was but short; for there was doubtless an immense amount of business to be talked over with Maximian. It was the first time the old colleagues had met since the outbreak of the persecution. It was the last time they were to meet before their intended abdication. They had to settle what day they should retire, and whom they should select to succeed to the Caesarships. The horizon was not entirely free from clouds. It is not

[1] Lact. mort. 16, 35. We may conclude that Donatus was in Holy Orders. He had been tortured on nine different occasions.

[2] So we see from the two laws in the Cod. Just. mentioned in note 2, p. 205.

improbable that Maximian began already to wince at the prospect of a speedy resignation, and gave symptoms to his antient friend of the disturbances he was destined to produce. And besides all this anxious thought, Diocletian of course found it necessary to go through much of that wearisome routine of public entertainments, games, banquets, religious ceremonies, to which sovereigns are inevitably doomed. Aged and infirm as he was, these things pleased him little, especially when he was so intensely and gloomily pre-occupied with cares of state. One stray remark of his is recorded, which has a distinctly pettish ring about it and seems to suit perfectly with the present occasion. "I am censor," he said; "the games should be more chaste when I am looking on[1]." And the people of Rome, who had only seen him once before during all his long reign, on the occasion of the Triumph, were very exacting. They pressed close to gaze upon the wonderful old statesman with irreverent curiosity. Diocletian, now long accustomed to the adorations and luxurious seclusion of his court at Nicomedia, found their familiarity disgusting and intolerable. The great day of the festival, as we have said, was the twenty-first of December. He was to be installed in his ninth consulship on the New Year's Day. All Rome was looking forward to a fortnight of gaieties, with a grand pageant at the end. But Diocletian could not endure it. He was sick at heart[2]. He felt his nervous irritability rising to one of those strange

[1] Vop. Carin. 20: *castiores esse oportere ludos, spectante censore.* The saying has much more point in this place than at the Triumph, where Mr Hunziker places it.

[2] Lact. mort. 17: *quibus sollemnibus celebratis, cum libertatem populi Romani ferre non poterat, impatiens et aeger animi, prorupit ex urbe, impendentibus kalendis Ianuariis, quibus nonus illi consulatus deferebatur.*

crises which we have noticed before. Suddenly, without warning, he flung out of the astonished city, determined to return to Nicomedia, and got as far as Ravenna by the first of January, where he suffered himself to be put through the ridiculous form of an investiture. The winter was a severe one, and he had already caught cold from exposure to the rain in coming from Rome[1]; but an excited, restless impulse[2] goaded him on again. He was so sick that he was forced to be carried in a litter, instead of the springless travelling-coaches of the day. But somewhere on the journey, —in all probability at Sirmium[3], where he had one of his many palaces—he succumbed entirely. His fine and sensitive system was shattered.

The remainder of the year 304 was a blank in the personal history of Diocletian. The paralysis affected not only his body, but his mind. That powerful and capacious intellect which had grasped and solved the problems of a world,—which had found the empire a chaos without form and void, and within twenty years had evoked a Golden Age,—which had carried, solitary yet stable, the weight of all the earth, as unsupported from without as the elephant of Indian allegory,—had so utterly shrivelled and collapsed, that though the empire was reeling to and fro with a new supreme concussion of the two greatest forces known, the only subject that suggested to it any anxiety was the opening of a new circus at Nicomedia[4].

[1] Id. ib. *sed profectus hieme, saeuiente frigore atque imbribus uerberatus, morbum leuem at perpetuum contraxit.*

[2] Vopiscus Num. 13 speaks of the *motus inquieti pectoris* as a characteristic of the man.

[3] The ms. of the *Mortes* has *per circuitum ripae strigae*, for which the most probable correction is, I think, *Istricae* 'of the Danube': this is Fritzsche's reading.

[4] Lact. mort. 17: *aestate transacta,*

For while Diocletian lay unconscious in his bed, or tottered vacantly about the warm garden or the new suites of his Sirmian retreat, the dread Fourth Edict had gone out, under his name and signet, to sort the world, man by man, woman by woman, child by child, whether they were on the Lord's side or on Satan's.

The date of the issue of this Fourth Edict is preserved to us in a certain account, which, taken apart by itself, would probably have seemed of little value, but is of surpassing interest when taken in connexion with the failure of Diocletian's powers[1]. The Emperor Maximian, we are told, went down from his capital to Rome, and was present on the eighteenth of April at the games in the Circus Maximus[2]. Suddenly there arose a cry from the assembled multitude (for doubtless all who attended these idolatrous shows were good Pagans), a cry so unanimous and well defined, that there could distinctly be counted twelve repetitions of the shout: "Away with the Christians!" The shout then changed its tone somewhat, and became appealing and personal: "O Augustus! no Christianity!" This cry was repeated ten times. In close sequence upon this popular demonstration, Eugenius Hermogenianus, the Prefect of the

Nicomediam uenit morbo iam graui insurgente; quo utcumque se premi uiderit, prolatus est tamen, ut circum quem fecerat dedicaret anno post uicennalia repleto.

[1] The *Passio S. Sabini* may be found in Baluz. Miscell. vol. II. p. 47; Baronius also quotes largely from it, in a somewhat simpler form, for the year 301. There is evidently some mistake in Hunziker's book, for he twice refers to this *Passio* as contained in Surius for Dec. 31; whereas Surius only gives a very different and inferior account, and the commemoration is on the 30th, not the 31st. Both Baluz and Baronius justly rate the value of the document very high, although they do not see aright to what period it belongs: the latter wishes the end were as authentic as the beginning.

[2] April 18 is one of the days marked LVDI in the Maffean marbles.

Praetorium,—or (according to another copy) of the City of Rome—to whom the mob referred the Emperor for an elucidation of their behaviour, introduced a motion into the Senate relative to the persecution of the Christians. That effete but venerable body welcomed his proposal; the Emperor graciously gave them leave to pass a resolution on the subject; and Maximian sent out a rescript, dated April 30[1], to the Augustalis of Tuscany[2], one Venustianus, containing just what we learn from other sources to have been the substance of the Fourth Edict.

Obviously the authority of this document must not be pressed too far. No other writing has yet been discovered which relates the same story; so that the account lacks explicit corroboration. And intrinsically, this *Passio S. Sabini* is not in the highest class of the historical relics of its age. It is not a mere transcript of official Acts, like those with which the last chapter closed. It is not (apparently) by an eyewitness, like the Passion of St Philip of Heraclea. It has probably been somewhat tricked up in the succeeding centuries, when Sabinus became one of the most influential of Italian saints. But neither is it of the worst description of legendary tales. The story has never passed through the constrictor-like mauling of a Simeon Metaphrastes. Such miraculous stuff as we find in it, is not at all inconsistent

[1] This agrees with the Eusebian date διαλαβόντος ἔτους, which I take to mean "at the division of the year." Supposing Diocletian *not* to be deranged at the time, it would have been impossible to consult him in the interval between the 18th and the 30th.

[2] I venture to think that this strange title is in favour of the authenticity of the document. It could scarcely have been invented by a forger. The office (as Ducange says s.v.) seems simply to have been that of *praeses;* but we have no other traces of the use of the title, except in the case of the Prefect of Egypt. It is perfectly possible that the government of Etruria likewise may have been rather peculiar.

with a very early date of manufacture[1]. All that part which is of consequence for the present purpose, is unaffected by any later additions. And lastly, as there is no direct corroboration of the story, so is there nothing whatever directly nor indirectly to disannul it.

Not only is it difficult to suspect the inornate narration,—the curious and purposeless details about the shouting,—the antiquarian correctness of the date of the games,—the reference to Maximian's presence at Rome, as a thing not of every day occurrence[2]: but that which at first sight looks most suspicious,—the decree of the Senate,—is really the greatest confirmation. Maximian was longing for leave to persecute in earnest. The heathen population knew it; and they knew also that Diocletian was not at present in a position to stop him. Now was their time, especially as Maximian was not often in the old city. A certain number agreed beforehand to raise in concert the shout that would charm their prince's ear. But Maximian was unused to acting on his own advice, and Diocletian could not (even if he would) advise him to attack the Christians. He felt sure of Galerius' support, but he was too far off to consult. He determined to see what the Senate thought about it. The Prefect of the city was of course but a creature of his own; and when he appeared in the Senate with his tremendous proposal, all the senators knew that it was an official measure. To have passed such a decree on their own responsibility, would have cost their heads[3]: when the proposal

[1] See p. 141, note 3.

[2] This is a really noticeable point, for very large numbers of the less trustworthy Acts think nothing of placing even Diocletian himself at Rome.

[3] No forger would have risked them so much.

came from such a quarter, it would have cost their heads to refuse. Maximian felt now that if Diocletian should recover and be put out by what had been done, at any rate he had got all the Senate (whom he detested) into the scrape. The situation is ludicrously true to his character. Now if this *Passio* were elaborately worked up like those which Simeon edited, we might have distrusted all the introductory matter, as mere lies for effect's sake: but in this bald, plain narrative, to assume that so artful an inventor has been at work appears ridiculous. The details are not of a kind which the ordinary interpolators of legends devise: they add nothing to the glory of the saint. But whatever we may think about the truthfulness of some of the minor details in this story, two things at any rate appear quite certainly historical: (1) Here, and here alone, we have the exact words of a part of the Fourth Edict; and (2) For some reason or another, the Fourth Edict was begotten at Rome, and Maximian was the father of it.

We see then that the only direct authority we have on the origin of the Fourth Edict,—an authority so simple and strong, that to reject it would be disloyal to the laws of historical criticism,—ascribes the authorship of this horrible decree to Maximian alone, giving a train of circumstances as its occasion, which requires only a little care—no wresting —to develope into something like positive certainty. Now if the revered Head-Emperor had been politically alive, in spite of all the truthful appearance of the Acts of St Sabinus, we should have been forced to throw them away as worthless, because they entirely exclude any action on the part of Diocletian; and without Jovius' nod Herculius never acted. But another historian, who is most careful

about his facts, though a miserable poor theorist, Lactantius, quite independently gives us strong reason to think that the revered Head-Emperor was politically dead,—as dead as Carus or Numerian. There is not a single thing recorded by any historian to shew that at this time Diocletian was politically alive, except that the Fourth Edict was so tremendous a measure as to make one doubt whether Maximian could possibly have issued it on his own responsibility: and yet the only authority (and that a really good one) for the origin of the measure, imperatively requires that Maximian alone should have issued it. Lactantius therefore and these Acts are the two sides of an arch, neither of which would be very firm alone, but which together form the strongest support that art or nature knows. And that which our arch supports is the grand fact, which grows to new certainty and to new significance the more it is pondered over;—that in the Fourth Edict of Diocletian, Diocletian had no more hand than Adam[1].

It is true that a recent German writer on the persecution of Diocletian, in treating of the motives which led to Diocletian's abdication, suggests doubt whether the Emperor's sickness was as grave as Lactantius, Eusebius[2], Constantine[3], Eumenius[4], and Julian the Apostate[5] conspire to represent it: but the mere roll-call of these varied authorities is enough to assure the reader that the account is substantially correct. That learned author is, I admit, less biassed than I am; for he does not perceive how the Fourth Edict is affected

[1] This is the first time that attention has been drawn to this weighty fact.

[2] Eus. Hist. Eccl. VIII. xiii. 11: *νόσου γαρ ουκ αἰσίας τῷ πρωτοστάτη.τῶν εἰρημένων ἐπισκηψάσης, ὑφ' ἧς δὴ καὶ τὰ τῆς διανοίας εἰς ἔκστασιν αὐτῷ παρήγετο.*

[3] Const. orat. ad s. coet. XXV. 2.

[4] Eum. paneg. Max. et Const. 9.

[5] Jul. Caess. p. 315 (Spanheim): *κάμνοντος αὐτοῦ.*

by an admission that the Emperor had broken down. He is therefore driven to find a reason for the promulgation of that decree. The most cunning discoverer of Christian plots has not been able to spy out any fresh conspiracies which could evoke this rejoinder: on the contrary, the Third Edict shews that such alarms were growing fainter. Mr Hunziker therefore finds a very clever reason. Diocletian, he thinks, was profoundly struck with the result of the Third Edict. The multitudes of Christian prelates, who on that occasion succumbed and sacrificed, were a palpable proof that the Church was thoroughly terrified. One more vigorous push, and the tottering edifice would fall. Now that so many rulers of the sect had conformed to the laws' demands, the majority of their subjects would follow suit. The remnant would easily be extirpated with the sword. And so the old Emperor determined to crown his efforts at the restoration of the Roman Empire by the issue of the Fourth Edict. It will be felt however that this is but a theory, and quite contradictory to the facts[1].

[1] I have deferred to this place any account of the inscription or inscriptions (for it seems uncertain whether we must use the singular or the plural), said to have been found at Clunia in Spain, because, if genuine, they must belong to this date. Very great stress has been laid upon it—or them—by all the writers who have desired to magnify Diocletian's supposed hatred and fear of Christianity. The three different forms of the inscription are given thus in Hübner (Corp. Inscr. Lat., vol. II. p. 26*):—

(1) diocletiano caes. aug. galerio in oriente adopt. superstitione christi ubiq. deleta et cultu deor. propagato.

(2) diocletian. iovius maximian. herculeus caess. augg. amplificato per orientem et occidentem imp. rom. et nomine christianor. deleto qui remp. evertebant.

(3) iiii. invicti caesaris matri deum sacello in durii amnis ancone instructe sub magnae pasiphaes numine privatum dianae sacrum fordam vaccam albam immolavere ob christianam eorum pia cura suppressam exstinctamque superstitionem dioclec. maximian. galerius et constantius imper. augggg. perpetui.

None of the authors who lay such store upon this aid, seem to have ex-

If our own conclusion needed any buttress, we should find such in the Fourth Edict itself. "We advise," it ran, "that wheresoever any Christians shall be found cherishing their superstition, they either be constrained to sacrifice to the gods, or, according to the table of penalties already fixed, die"—a grim hint of some little addition by Maximian to the First Edict—"and be dispossessed of their goods and chattels, and joined with the public rates in the same department of the Emperor's private treasury[1]."

amined the question of genuineness, but have simply repeated one another's statements. Thus Burckhardt, who takes the inscription from Muratori, does not observe that Muratori copies it from Manutius, and that Manutius says of it *fictam puto:* and Hunziker, who gives a reference to Gruter, apparently has not even looked it out, for his reference is given wrong twice over. The third form has been distinctly traced to a collection of *nothing but* forgeries. The first and second forms rest on no better authority than that of Strada, who is stigmatised by Hübner as *homo minime doctus*, a mere mercenary bookmaker of his time. Hübner (who, I believe, has no bias either way) places these inscriptions without hesitation among the forgeries: *tituli falsi sine dubio, qui usque ad hoc tempus ab hominibus nonnullis non indoctis pro genuinis habiti sunt* (p. 383): he calls special attention on p. 26* to the fact that Wietersheim has allowed himself to be imposed upon. It adds greatly to the suspiciousness of these inscriptions that the same Clunia lays claim to another, undoubtedly forged, and relating to the persecution under Nero!

But even granting (as it seems impossible to grant) the genuineness of these inscriptions, how ridiculous to take them *au grand sérieux*, and make Diocletian responsible for the posting of a tablet by the authorities of a little Spanish town. Surely, if Diocletian felt that the Christians were overturning the state, and that he had succeeded in uprooting them, we should have had something more on the scale of his Thermae, and situated at Rome or Nicomedia, or Treves or Sirmium at the least, to be the memorial of so great a fact.

[I am indebted to Professor Westcott for first calling my attention to the spuriousness of these inscriptions: their profound insignificance I had felt before.]

[1] The Latin is: *ideoque commonemus ut, ubicumque Christiani inuenti fuerint superstitionem colentes, aut sacrificare cogantur dis, aut, certis poenis, intereant facultatibusque nudati eodem fisco cum tributis publicis socientur.* This is an amendment on the old punctuation. The word *que* is the only possible conjunction here: *et* would have signified that the same persons were to undergo both penalties, death and imperial slavery:

But how were they to know whether any Christians yet cherished their superstition? The method was simple, and Eusebius records it. "It was commanded, by an universal order, that in each town the people one and all, without exception, should both offer sacrifice and also"—*one* act did not make sure enough—"pour libation to the idols[1]." To be quite certain that no one escaped the compulsion, the same plan no doubt was followed as in the succeeding year, under Maximin, in Palestine[2]. The local magistrates were charged to take especial pains to make the entire population sacrifice effectively once for all. To this end criers were to go down every street, and proclaim that men, women, and children were to repair immediately to the idol temples by order of the governor. None could plead that he was ignorant of the new command. Finally, centurions were furnished with lists of all the people in the town, and stood by the altars to summon every person, male or female, young or old, rich or poor, by name, singly.

Any one who seriously considers this diabolical document, cannot fail to perceive, how contrary it was, in several, nay, in all of its characteristics, not only to what we should consider Diocletian likely to do in the way of persecution, but to what we have in fact seen that he did. If it were really true that Diocletian himself had issued it, we should be compelled to feel that much of what was gathered together in our second and third chapters was either untrue or strangely at variance with the Emperor's later attitude. But on the other hand, when it is found (quite

que joins the two together as *certae poenae* to be applied to the respective cases.

[1] Eus. mart. Pal. iii. 1.

[2] Eus. mart. Pal. iv. 8. This was a mere repetition of the unimprovable Fourth Edict.

apart from those preliminary considerations) that Diocletian's physical and mental state precluded him from the possibility of doing grave public business in the year 304, while trustworthy evidence lays the guilt of the Fourth Edict at another's door, we rejoice to find our original verdict conclusively ratified. This new measure was a recurrence to ideas and means long out of date, however clever ;—a retrogression into the pre-Valerianic period of persecutions. It added nothing to the statute-book. It had nothing permanent and systematic about it, like the First Edict, upon which posterity were to act day by day, whenever a case of Christianity occurred, in as legal and regular a manner as with a case of adultery or theft. It was a mere violent, convulsive, unintelligent assault. Diocletian had not encouraged any plan of information against Christians, and had only with extreme reluctance consented to make the profession of our faith a statutable offence at all. But this Fourth Edict was for the very purpose of leaving not a Christian undiscovered, and of punishing them every one. And again, Diocletian had shewn a determination not to shed blood, which even the fierce and dangerous Galerius was unable to shake. But this Fourth Edict expressly sanctioned, as the recognised law of the whole empire, a private expression of the bloody will of Maximian confided in rescripts to his subordinates : it sanctioned death as a 'penalty already fixed,' not as a new thing ; and it will be seen presently that even in the hemisphere over which Diocletian still nominally ruled, the one punishment which he so doggedly refused to admit, preferring even to risk a rupture with Galerius, was, immediately on the publication of this edict, again and again employed. Diocletian, though he might

have wished Christianity safely abolished, feared the growing power of the Church, and dared not persecute (till he was forced), lest he should rouse her from her passivity. But this Fourth Edict was nothing more nor less than a loud alarum to muster the army of the Church: as the centurions called over their lists, it taught her the statistics of her numbers, down to the last child: it proved to her that her troops could endure all the hardships of the campaign: it ranged her generals in the exact order of merit. Diocletian, by an exquisite refinement of thought, while he did not neglect the salutary fear which strong penalties might inspire in the Christians, knew well enough that though he might torture every believer in the world into sacrificing, yet Christianity was not killed: he knew that men were Christians again afterwards as well as before[1]: could he have seen deeper yet, he would have known that the utter humiliation of a fall before men and angels converted many a hard and worldly prelate into a faithful broken-hearted saint[2]: and so he rested his hopes not mainly on the punishment of individuals, but on his three great measures for crushing the corporate life,—the destruction of the Churches, the Scriptures, and the Clergy. But this Fourth Edict evidently returns with crass dulness and brutal complacency to the thought, that if half the Church were racked till they poured the libations, and the other half burnt or butchered, Paganism would reign alone for evermore, and that the means were as eminently desirable as the end. Lastly, Dio-

[1] Cf. Tert. apol. 11: *ne compulsus negare non ex fide negarit; et absolutus hidem post tribunal de uestra rideat aemulatione, iterum Christianus.*

[2] Whoever wishes to understand this, or indeed to realise the inner feelings of our brethren at that time, had better read Canon Kingsley's poem *Saint Maura*, A. D. 304. Lactantius puts the same thought admirably in div. inst. v. 13.

cletian had anxiously avoided all that could rouse fanatic zeal. The first result of the Fourth Edict was to rouse it[1].

About the time that the edict was published, Asclepiades[2], the Proconsul of Palestine who had sentenced Romanus, was succeeded by one Urbanus, appointed (no doubt) by Galerius, —a monster who not merely gave cruel judgments to curry favour with his master, but also to please himself. He had lately made the gratifying announcement to the pagan world that he had a Christian lady by him, whom he proposed to bring into the arena at the approaching games, to make sport with the wild beasts. It was the first time such a thing had been announced for many a long year; and the sensation throughout Palestine was immense. The Christians shared in the uncontrollable excitement, and with a most unwholesome effect. On the day that the show was to be exhibited, six young men,—all of whom (save one) were strangers at Caesarea, the scene of the occurrence, and so had avoided the roll-call,—tied one another's hands fast, to prove (says Eusebius) their extreme alacrity to become martyrs, and running up at a great pace, just as Urban set foot on the stairs of the crowded amphitheatre, earnestly invited his attention to the fact that they were Christians, and offered to prove conclusively that the assaults of the wild beasts had no terrors for those who made their boast in the God of all. They had their evil desire. As soon as the magistrate recovered from the first shock of indignant surprise, they were at once shut up in the jail, and after a few days, with the

[1] If it ever should be proved that Diocletian really did promulgate this extraordinary recantation of his principles, it would give a sufficient proof of Lactantius' statement that he was mad.

[2] So he is named in the Greek *menaeum*.

addition of two others—one of whom seems to have been condemned merely because he tended their necessities in the prison,—were led out and beheaded [1].

But this distressing and morbid symptom was not confined to the East. On the 12th of August, 304, at Catana in Sicily, "the Deacon Euplius, standing outside the curtain of the court, cried out loud, saying: 'I am a Christian, and for the name of Christ I long to die.' Calvisian the Consular hearing it, said: 'Let the man that shouted come in.' When Euplius was come into the judge's court, carrying the Gospels, one of Calvisian's friends, called Maximus, said: 'He ought not to carry such papers contrary to the royal order.' Calvisian the Consular said: 'Where do these come from? did they come out of your house?' Euplius answered: 'I have no house, as my Lord Jesus Christ knows.' Calvisian the Consular said: 'Was it you who brought them here?' Euplius said: 'It was I who brought them here with my own hands, as you can see quite well:—they found me with them.' Calvisian said: 'Read them.' Euplius opening read: 'Blessed are they that suffer persecution for righteousness' sake, for their's is the kingdom of Heaven.' And then in another place, 'Whoso will come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me.' When he had read these and other passages, Calvisian the Consular said: 'What does this mean?' Euplius said: 'The law of my Lord, which was delivered to me.' Calvisian the Consular said: 'By whom?' [2] Euplius answered: 'By Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God.' Calvisian the Consular, pronouncing a preliminary sentence, said: 'Since his confession is notorious, let him be examined under torture:

[1] Eus. mart. Pal. III.

[2] Calvisian wishes to punish the person who gave him the book, rather than poor Euplius himself.

let him be delivered to the torturers.' And when he had been delivered, the second trial, by inquisition[1], began.

"On the twelfth of August, in the ninth consulship of Diocletian and eighth of Maximian, Calvisian the Consular said to Euplius, as he lay on the rack: 'With regard to your own admission made to-day, what say you of it now?' Euplius, with the hand that was free making the sign of the cross upon his forehead, replied: 'What I said then, that I confess now, that I am a Christian, and read the Divine Scriptures.' Calvisian said: 'Why did you keep these Lessons and not give them up, when the Emperors forbad them?' Euplius answered: 'Because I am a Christian, and might not give them up; and it is more expedient to die than to give them up. In these is eternal life. He who gives them up loses eternal life. That I may not lose that, I give my life.' Calvisian, pronouncing the preliminary sentence, said: 'Let Euplius, who did not give up the Scriptures according to the edict of the sovereigns, but reads them to the people, be tortured.' And being tortured, Euplius said: 'Thanks to Thee, O Christ. Guard Thou me, who suffer these things for Thee.' Calvisian the Consular said: 'Stop this madness, Euplius.' Euplius said: 'I worship Christ. I detest the devils. Do what you will, I am a Christian. I have long wished for this. Do what you will. Bring fresh instruments; I am a Christian.' After he had been racked a great while, the tormentors were told to rest for a space. And Calvisian said: 'Wretched man, worship the gods; do reverence to Mars, Apollo, and Aesculapius.' Euplius said: 'I worship the Father, and the Son, and the

[1] The *prima cognitio* consists of Euplius' confession: the second is to see whether he still holds to the confession.

Holy Ghost. I worship the Holy Trinity, beside whom there is no God. Perish the gods that made not heaven and earth and that which is in them. I am a Christian.' Calvisian the Prefect said: 'Sacrifice, if you would go free.' Euplius said: 'I only sacrifice to Christ, who is God, and I myself am the victim: what to do farther, I find not. Your attempt is vain; I am a Christian.' Calvisian ordered him to be tortured again more sharply. And being tortured, Euplius said: 'Thanks to Thee, O Christ. O Christ, succour! For Thee I suffer thus, O Christ.' And he said it somewhat often. And when his strength failed, he said with his lips alone, without voice, these same things, or perhaps others.

"Calvisian, entering into the interior, within the curtain, dictated the sentence. And coming out, carrying the tablet, he read: 'I order Euplius, the Christian, who contemns the edicts of the sovereigns, blaspheming the gods, and refuses to return to his senses, to be executed with the sword. Lead him out.' Then the Gospel, with which he had been arrested, was hung to his neck, the crier proclaiming: 'Euplius, the Christian, the enemy of the gods and the Emperors.' Euplius was merry, and said again and again: 'Thanks to Christ the true God.' And when he had been brought to the spot, kneeling down, he prayed at some length. And again giving thanks, he offered his neck, and was beheaded by the executioner. His body was afterwards taken up by the Christians, and, after being embalmed with spices, was buried[1]."

This strange lust after *self-sacrifice* takes almost a comical form in the instance immortalized by the tripping spritely third Crown-song of Prudentius. Saint Eulalia, the theme

[1] Ruinart, p. 361.

of the piece, was the daughter of an opulent Christian gentleman of Emerita in Spain. At the time of the issue of the Fourth Edict, she had hardly attained to the tale of twelve years, which was fixed by Roman law as the marriageable age. But she was in advance of her years.

> "Long time had they that knew her known,
> her face was toward the heavenly Throne:
> from earliest years the maid had shewn
> she never meant to wed,—
> had flung her little toys away,
> and said as plain as babes can say,
> that it was very wrong to play.
> If e'er upon her head
> to place a rosy wreath they tried,
> the tiny anchoret had cried:
> the tempting goldstick she defied,
> the glittering beads forswore.
> So stern she moved and self-possessed,
> that gray philosophers confessed,
> she mused as deeply as the best,
> a moralist of four."

There was a grave fear lest so austere a spirit should be obnoxious to dangers under the exciting influence of the persecution; and therefore on the arrival of the general command to enforce sacrifice, St Eulalia's parents had the prudence to leave the town and proceed to their country house, at a great and (they hoped) a safe distance from Emerita. They took the further precaution of forbidding the damsel to show herself outside the door,

> "lest doting on Death's awful charms,
> the fierce maid rush to reach his arms.
> But she:—the place was dull as dull:
> she could not brook to stay
> in ease and inactivity:—
> one night, when no one else could see,
> she found the door, she turn'd the key,
> and fairly ran away."

If we may believe the poet, the Angels abetted her escapade, by affording her a light for her journey. Early in the morning she presented herself, with her feet bleeding and her garments tattered from her long rough walk, at the tribunal of Dacianus; and standing full in the midst between the lictors delivered herself of a withering denuntiation of all those who worshipped "scraped stones," and of the Emperor Maximian in particular. She closed her speech with an invitation to the torturers to try if their vivisections could discover her soul. The Commissioner, usually so fierce, was apparently captivated by the picturesqueness of the situation, and after threatening Eulalia with a horrible fate, attempted to offer her a distinguished gallantry.

"But oh I wish before thy death,—
if such a thing might be,—
that thou, dear scolding little girl,
thy naughtiness wouldst see!
Thou'rt just of ripe age to be wed:
thou must not fling away,
like flowers mown before they're blown,
the pleasures of that day."

The magistrate added more in much the same strain.

"Never a word the martyr spake,
but *roar'd* aloud for wrath,
and even as the tyrant sat,
right in his eyes Eulalia spat,
next, scatter'd all the idols round,
and flung the censers on the ground,
and spurn'd them from her path."

These proceedings aroused Dacianus to a less complimentary view of Eulalia's position, and the young lady at last expired under the infliction of barbarities worthy of her judge's reputation[1].

[1] Prud. peri steph. III.

These are samples of the mode in which enthusiastic persons now began to throw themselves voluntarily in the way of death, not observing the old rule of the Church, by which such martyrdoms were held to be unworthy of the name, and a disgrace rather than a glory. Such scenes became extremely common. At Nicomedia, according to the popular story which had reached Eusebius[1], whenever any person was condemned to the flames, numbers of men and women were sure to throw themselves into the burning along with him. But the most noticeable thing is, that now we find every person, who is proved a Christian, condemned to death solely on that account. The manner of the death depends on the pitifulness or the cruelty of the judge: but death in some form is the law. In that province where but a year back the fear of Diocletian had caused the reversal of a sentence of death without torture, in an aggravated case of defiance, a defenceless and innocent lady is exposed, without a murmur of disapprobation, to die at the paw of the lion and the bear, before the excited and gloating eyes of half a province. The truth is, that the whole East now, since Diocletian's collapse, was lying bound and helpless, like St Thecla in the amphitheatre of Caesarea, before the Evil Beast himself.

And horrible as were such deaths as these, there were worse things yet,—a hundred thousandfold more horrible; and far more alien from the earnest morality of Diocletian. These foul Satanic Dacian boors, to whom Satan had given all the kingdoms of this world, had sent a rescript—the authorities are incontroversible—to many (at any rate) among their lieutenants, specially directed against that large and

[1] Eus. hist. eccl. VIII. vi. 6.

increasing class of women, who had devoted themselves—mistakenly it may be—to go for ever without the holy bliss of motherhood. Let any person read the story of St Didymus and St Theodora, one of the truest, simplest, tenderest stories ever lived through; and then say whether such a thing could ever have happened in the year 304, had not Diocletian, in his palace at Sirmium, been lying all through those sweet May days[1] unconscious that his brother and his son were ruining the world for which he had toiled so well.

"In the city of Alexandria, Proculus, sitting before the judgment-seat, said, 'Call the Virgin Theodora.' The clerk answered from his desk, 'Theodora is at the bar.' The judge said, 'Of what condition art thou?' Theodora answered, 'I am a Christian.' The judge said, 'Art thou freeborn or a serving-maid?' Theodora answered, 'I have already told thee; I am a Christian. Christ came and set me free; for as far as this world is concerned, I was born free.' The judge said, 'Call the Curator of the city.' And when he came, he said to him, 'Tell me what thou knowest of the Virgin Theodora.' Lucius the Curator said, 'By your worship, she is freeborn and a lady too, and of a very excellent family.' The judge said, 'Then if freeborn, why wouldest thou not be married[2]?'

[1] It was in May that they—or perhaps he only—suffered.

[2] Compare the Acts of St Pollio (Ruin. p. 359), where the president asks the martyr, 'What office do you bear?' Pollio said 'The Chief of the Readers.' Probus said, 'Of what readers?' Pollio answered, 'Of those who according to usage read the Divine eloquence to the people.' Probus sarcastically says, 'Those who mislead light silly women by forbidding them to marry, and are said to persuade them to some nonsense about chastity.' Pollio only retorts with offering to show the judge that day a sample of Christian lightness and nonsense.

Theodora answered, 'For Christ's sake. Coming in the flesh into this world, He withdrew us from corruption and promised us eternal life. Therefore so long as I remain in the faith of Him, I believe I shall remain intact.' The judge said, 'The Emperors have commanded that all ye who are Virgins must either sacrifice to the gods, or be thereunto incited by being abused in a brothel[1].' Theodora answered, 'I suppose that thou art aware that the Lord is a regarder of men's wills: God seeth the will to be chaste. And if thou forcest me to do this, then is it no harlotry,—only a deed of violence done by you.' The judge said, 'As I learn that thou art of good birth, and as I feel compassion for thy beautiful face, I shall take pity on thee. But I warn thee not to trifle with me, for (by all the gods) it will do thee no good. The Emperors have made a decree that all ye who are Virgins must either sacrifice to the gods, or be thereunto incited by being abused in a brothel.' Theodora answered, 'I have already told thee, that God is a regarder of the will: for He hath foreknowledge, and He seeth the thoughts. Wherefore if I am forced to do this, I do not judge it to be fornication: just as if thou shouldest choose to cut off my head, or hand, or foot, or to cut up my whole body: these would be works of thy violence, not of my will. For I, for my part, mean to remain in God. For my vow itself, so far as that is concerned, is but a gift of God, for to Him belongs virginity, and also the power to confess Him[2]. And He is the Lord, and He can keep His gift safe,

[1] The Latin, which is evidently a quotation from the actual rescript, both from its stilted style, and from being word for word repeated below, runs thus: *iusserunt imperatores* [*imperatores statuerunt*] *uos quae estis uirgines aut diis sacrificare, aut iniuria meritorii prouocari.*

[2] The Latin is much neater: *dei enim promissio, quantum ad meum uotum pertinet; ipsi enim adiacet uirginitas et confessio.*

according as He will.' The judge said, 'Thou must never think of disgracing thy family, and being a reproach to it for ever. According to the witness which the Curator gave of thee, thou art freeborn, and worthy of respect, and of the highest birth.' Theodora answered, 'I acknowledge the Lord Christ as the highest, who gave me my free birth and my honourable estate, and who knows well how to preserve His own turtledove.' The judge said, 'Why dost thou make such a mistake as to trust a man that was crucified. Think not that when thou art delivered into the brothel thou wilt be preserved without stain. Therefore, for every reason, it will be madness to persist.' Theodora answered, 'I trust Christ, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, that He will free me from the hands of these enemies, and that He will preserve me without stain while I persevere in the faith of Him; and I cannot deny it.'

"The judge said, 'I am bearing with thy prattle, and have not yet put thee under torture; but if thou persistest in thy contradiction, I must have thee overcome like any slave-girl. I must cause the command of our lords the Emperors to be fulfilled, for an ensample unto other women.' To whom Theodora answered, 'I am ready to give up my body, over which thou hast power; but God has the power over my soul.' The judge said, 'Buffet her somewhat smartly with the palms of your hands, and say to her, Be not a fool, but go up and sacrifice to the gods.' Theodora answered, 'By the Lord I will not sacrifice, nor worship the devils, while I have the Lord for my helper.' The judge said, 'Fool, thou hast forced me to do an injury to thee who art a freeborn woman, to cast thee unto such a rabble as are waiting eagerly for thy sentence to be passed.' Theodora answered, 'I am no fool

for confessing the Lord. Also what thou sayest to be an injury, will be an honour and glory to me unto all time.' The judge said, 'I shall no longer suffer thee, but do the bidding of our lords the Emperors. For I suffered thee, hoping that thou wouldest be persuaded, but if I spare thee now any longer, I shall be found contrary to the imperial decree.' Theodora answered, 'Just as thou art afraid, and hastenest to perform what is bidden thee, so I too hasten not to deny my Lord; for I am afraid to despise the true King.' The judge said, 'Dost thou despise the command of the everlasting Emperors, and think me to be a fool? See (saith he) lest thou begin to feel by experience. Therefore I give thee three days' space from now; and by the gods, unless thou dost consent, I will place thee in the brothel, that all women may see thee, and seeing thee may be convinced of the injuries which themselves must undergo.' Theodora answered, 'God is the same now as ever He was, who will not suffer me to fall away from Him. Therefore I am ready to offer thee my body, for to me these three days are already as good as gone. Do therefore as thou wilt. But I beg thee, order me to be kept without pollution, until thou dost pronounce my sentence.' The judge said, 'I order Theodora to be kept three full days under befitting custody, if perchance she may repent and persuade herself to draw back from so monstrous a contumacy. And take heed ye offer her no violence, forasmuch as she is of a noble family.'

"So after three days, the judge, having taken his seat, ordered Theodora to be called. The judge said, 'If thou hast mended thy ways, sacrifice and go. But I tell thee, if thou stickest to thy purpose, thou shalt not be left a Virgin.' Theodora answered, 'I have already told thee, and ask no

leave to tell thee again, that the gift of chastity is through Christ, the declaration of uncorruptibleness and the profession of faith is through the Lord Christ, and He knows how to preserve His lamb and His handmaid.' The judge said, 'By the gods, for sheer fear of the command of the Emperors, I must pass sentence on thee, lest, if I do it not, I myself be accused. But thou shalt understand that it is thyself that hast put thyself into the brothel, by refusing to sacrifice to the idols. Let us see whether Christ, for whose sake thou hast persisted in thy contumacy, will keep thee safe.' Theodora answered, 'God, who perceiveth all secrets and knoweth all things long before, and who hath kept me without stain unto this day because of His promise, He will keep me also from the foul and wicked men who are prepared to insult God's handmaid.'"

And so the great heroine was led by the satellites of justice into the brothel. A peerless traditor, she had been willing to surrender even a nobler treasure than Hermes of Heraclea had surrendered. Nor was her confidence vain. The Lord whom she trusted had provided a means for her escape. It was not that those who dared to gaze profanely on her consecrated form were struck, as in the story of St Agnes, with blindness, and restored to sight by the Virgin's prayer. No angel appeared to open the doors and lead her forth. Her deliverance was effected by a simple brave deed of human kindness. The amused rabble of Alexandria were standing by the house to watch who would first go in to seize the victim, when an officer of high rank, clad in his military garb, pushed his way through, and entered amid the laughter of the mob into the infamous den. Didymus the Christian had not been ashamed to feign himself one of the wicked, not

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afraid to risk his life, if he might by any means save the maiden from less gentle hands. "Fear not," he said, as Theodora's courage sank at his entrance; "I wear the Devil's livery, but I am thy brother. Come, change raiment with me. Has not the Apostle said, I beseech you, be as I am?[1]" The great helmet was put upon her head, and the long cloak covered her figure, only showing the military sandals and greaves beneath. Didymus bad her hang her head, as men do who visit such houses, and to speak to no one at the door. The next person who went into the chamber was astonished to find only a grown man sitting there. 'God's turtledove' was flown.

Didymus was of course taken to the Augustal's tribunal. Proculus asked who had suggested to him to do the deed. He answered, 'God sent me to do it.' 'Confess,' said the judge, 'before you are tortured, where Theodora is.' Didymus answered, '*Where* she is, by Jesus Christ the Son of God, I know not: but I know and am sure that she is a handmaid of God, and that having once confessed Christ she remained inviolate, and God has kept her unsullied. The credit of what I have done, therefore, belongs to the Lord, and not to me; for God did it for her according to His faithfulness, as thou thyself knowest, if but thou wouldest confess.' The judge ordered him to execution. Didymus replied, 'Blessed art Thou, O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hast not despised my device, and hast saved thy handmaid Theodora[2].'

It seems almost incredible that human beings should deliberately have put this hideous affront upon human nature in

[1] Galatians iv. 12.

[2] Ruinart, p. 352.

the sacred name of law. But it becomes more shocking still, when a closer inspection leads to the belief that the suggestion originated in the studies of the New Platonists. It was apparently about the time of the issue of the Fourth Edict, that the philosophic magician Theotecnus was appointed by Galerius to the chief magistracy of Galatia, having pledged himself to uproot the Christian superstition in his district. There he made his first experiments in those damned arts of persecution, which he carried to so high a finish later on under Maximin at Antioch. There he first tried the effect of sending St Tecusa, and six other nuns with her, to the house of shame[1]. From that time, this devilish device became common. The wide spread of the practice proves the truth of the remark in the Acts of St Didymus, that rape became a legal weapon, by imperial decree. It was not a fortuitous coincidence that governors in East and West hit at the same time upon this cogent argument. While St Theodora suffered from the loathsome prank in Egypt, and St Tecusa at Ancyra, at Rome the queenly child St Agnes was subjected to the same discipline beneath Maximian's lewd eye. At Thessalonica, the Virgin Irene was brought down from the cave, whither she and her sisters had retired since the First Edict was put forth in order to read the Holy Scriptures unmolested, and led by the common hangman to the brothel. The pages of St Ambrose and St Chrysostom abound with similar tales. If one thing more than another could promote the development of that primitive Order of Virgins, which filled the great Milanese Pontiff with such enthusiasm, it was the manner in which they were singled out to bear the most

[1] See the Life of St Theodotus in the Appendix.

frightful assault in all the persecution. The fiends that sought to destroy the Church's precious innocence, had overshot their mark[1].

[1] Unfortunately suicide was often practised in such cases, and is lauded beyond measure by authors of the temper of Eusebius and St Chrysostom.

CHAPTER VII.

FROM DIOCLETIAN TO CONSTANTINE.

O the Efficacy of a Godly Emperours Example, which did draw many to a conscientious love of Christianity, and did drive more to a civil conformity thereunto! The *Gospel*, formerly a *Forester*, now became a *Citizen;* and leaving the Woods, wherein it wandered, Hils and Holes, where it hid it self before, dwelt quietly in Populous Places. And if it be true, what one relates, that about this time, when the Church began to be inriched with Meanes, there came a voice from Heaven (I dare boldly say, he that first wrote it never heard it, being a modern Authour) saying, *Now is Poison poured down into the Church:* yet is there no danger of *Death* thereby, seeing lately so strong an *Antidote* hath been given against it. FULLER.

THUS angry had the strife become when Diocletian awoke from his torpor to find his abdication-day at hand. Ill as he was, they had found means to bring him to Nicomedia towards the end of the year 304, in time for the inauguration of the new circus. But the Emperor had been unable to take part in the festival. The journey from Sirmium had proved too great a trial for his enfeebled powers, and on the 13th of December, in spite of the litanies offered up in all the temples of the town, the woebegone looks of the palace servants and the adjournment of the judicial sessions[1] conveyed to the world without the intelligence that the Augustus was no more. Early the next day, however, it was discovered that life was still present, and that what seemed death had been only a longer fainting fit than

[1] Lact. mort. 17: *iudicum trepidatio et silentium*, means, I suppose, a *justitium*.

usual. But the bulletins which issued from the imperial chamber were so reserved, that many persons suspected that Diocletian was indeed dead, and his death only concealed for fear the troops should attempt some revolution before the expected arrival of Galerius. The suspicion spread and fortified itself for three months, and could not be convinced by anything short of the public appearance of the old Emperor himself, on the 1st of March, so ill and wasted as scarcely to be recognised, and still subject to the attacks of an intermittent imbecility[1].

It was not long after this occurrence that the Caesar appeared at the capital. He had come, according to agreement, to be admitted Augustus in Diocletian's stead on the kalends of May; and he had no suspicion whatever that his father-in-law had suffered a change of mind upon the subject of his withdrawal. What was his surprise to find that Diocletian,—who had so strenuously maintained the doctrine of vicennial abdication, and had coerced Maximian into accepting the same view,—was now as loth as Maximian himself to surrender the helm of government! Such was the case. Diocletian was no longer looking forward to the 1st of May with the pleasant sense of an approaching holiday. Sadly and wearily he had come to the conclusion that for the world's sake he must toil yet longer at his great task, and, if need be, die in harness.

No clear account has ever yet been given of the circumstances which attended the famous abdication of Diocletian, although the seeming discrepancies between the original

[1] Id. ib.: *animam receperat, nec tamen totam; demens enim factus est ita ut certis horis insaniret, certis resipiscerct.* Cf. the passage of Eusebius quoted on p. 216.

authorities are susceptible, I believe, of being easily put in harmony. It is a fact, which cannot be disproved, that the great Refounder of the Empire had from the beginning meant to retire after his twentieth year of office, and to set thus an example which his successors were to follow. His resolution was not suddenly taken (as some elder writers appear to suggest) because an unforeseen and accidental sickness in the year 305 had made him feel unfit for work[1]. It was the outcome of sagacious observation and long forethought. Few men can fill a very laborious and anxious post, with real success, for more than a score of years. After so liberal a trial, a bad ruler can make none believe his promises of improvement, while a good ruler runs the risk of being compared unfavourably with his earlier self. Better to withdraw into a distinguished repose, amid the astonished plaudits of mankind, than to be called by a single tongue a dotard on the throne. And in the empire which Diocletian ruled there was a further reason which made it prudent to retire. Men like the Emperor's hopeful heir-apparent might be content to wait many years for the peaceful reversion of the sceptre, if the date were fixed at which it would surely be their own; but otherwise, the temptation would be strong to fix at their own pleasure the close of a predecessor's life. And now Diocletian's ambition was more than satisfied. He had fully determined to resign his power on the twentieth anniversary of the day which had seen Maximian made

[1] Hunziker quietly assumes that this is Lactantius' view of the matter, the fact being that Lactantius treats the entire affair as a deposition, not as a voluntary abdication at all. I ought to have added Eutropius on p. 216 to the list of authorities for Diocletian's illness.

Caesar[1]; and he had thought to resign it with confidence into the hands of Constantius, with Galerius for coadjutor.

Yet Lactantius' story is but exaggerated, not untrue, when he says that the Caesar came, not to congratulate his wife's father on recovery from sickness, but to force him off the throne[2]. Diocletian had undergone no change of view on the abstract theoretical wisdom of vicennial abdication, nor had his disorder reduced him to that vulgar jealousy which might make him cling to power, as dying men cling to life: but, since his interview with Maximian in December, events had taken place of which he had only just become aware, and which made him feel how fearfully dangerous it would be to relinquish the direction of affairs. During that period of derangement Galerius had given proof that he was capable of overturning all the good which Diocletian had done. Maximian and he together had shot abroad those two fell edicts, which ordered that every human being should by compulsion offer sacrifice to idols which half the race abhorred, and that every Christian Nun should suffer the extremest outrage which humanity can offer to humanity. The great Church was awake, and was beginning to lift her towering height in a furious and frenzied enthusiasm. Unless something were done at once to appease the mighty rebel, there was good reason to expect such a civil war as earth had never known. And Galerius was blind to the danger. Galerius could, and would, do nothing to soothe the Christians. Galerius was bent, not upon quelling a chance conspiracy in the brotherhood, but upon putting the whole

[1] This seems very probably to be the reason why May 1 was selected: I take the thought from Mr Hunziker, who has worked the subject out, p. 201 foll.

[2] Lact. mort. 18.

brotherhood to the sword. Diocletian saw where the only hope lay. The 'Second Augustus' alone could cope with the emergency. A German writer of repute has tried to win him credit for tenderness of heart by arguing that he retired because he could not bear the cruelties of the persecution[1]; but how far nobler and more magnanimous his conduct was, when the facts are known. Returning from the jaws of death, and still (from overwork) but half alive, he was ready to forgo his hardearned rest, the *éclat* of an abdication, and the home he had so long been preparing for his old age, rather than see the empire go back to the rack and ruin from which he had delivered it.

But the Evil Beast had no eye for the nobility of Diocletian's self-sacrificing proposal. He began—so Lactantius learned from Constantine, or someone else about the court—civilly enough, making much of his benefactor's recent sickness, and the benefits he would gain by the change to Illyrian air. But Diocletian was more solicitous about the health of the empire than his own, and stuck to his point. Then the Caesar waxed warmer, and spoke openly about his own expectations. The argument was indeed a fair one. Diocletian had promised him the succession, and felt that the argument was fair. It is said that he even offered to sacrifice his quadruple system as the price of retaining some control upon the administration. "There is no reason," he said, "if you must needs be an Emperor, why all four should not be Augusti together[2]." He would hardly have suggested such a concession, had he been the strong man that he was once. Galerius saw that he was gaining the advantage, and followed it up. He

[1] Keim, *Uebertritt Constantins*, p. 78.

[2] Lact. mort. 18: *uerum si nomen imperatoris cuperet adipisci, impedimento nihil esse, quominus omnes Augusti nuncuparentur.*

vowed that Diocletian's plan of an imperial college was the best that could be devised, and that he would never see it abandoned. But fifteen years spent in fighting savages on the banks of the Danube was as much exile, and as much drudgery, as could be expected from any man who was powerful enough to choose. In proportion as the worn-out Emperor shewed signs of coming to terms, so Galerius advanced in violence. He had thoroughly alarmed the old man two years before, and now it was easier to alarm him. "If you, sir," he said at length, "refuse to oblige me, I must see how else I can better myself[1]." Perhaps Diocletian had felt throughout that it was but a forlorn hope. He turned once more to his omens and his oracles[2], and he found the outlook dark. The answer of fate came back that a great crash awaited the empire[3]. Diocletian felt that he could not withstand fate; he determined to abandon the Church and the world to the inevitable issue, and to betake the life which after all had proved a failure to the solitude, the homeliness, the religion of Spalatro.

But he had another disappointment to endure before leaving Nicomedia. There is no reason to doubt that Diocletian, having been successfully brought back by Galerius to his original design of abdication, was next driven against his will into altering the succession. For many years the old Emperor had kept close to his person the able and judicious son of Constantius and St Helen, —not as a hostage (as it has been stated), for Constantius

[1] Id. ib.: *si ipse cedere noluisset, se sibi consulturum, ne amplius minor et extremus esset.*

[2] Zosim. ii.; Aur. Vict. Caess. xxxix. 48.

[3] Aur. Vict. l. c.: *fragorem quendam impendere comperit status Romani.*

was not a prince who needed such rivets to fix his loyalty; it would have been absurd to keep Constantine as a security for his father, while the son of the restless Maximian lived at large in Italy. Everything shews that Constantine in the palace of Nicomedia was being educated for the work Diocletian meant him to fulfil; he was learning the wisdom of the Egyptians[1]. The Emperor had already advanced him to high military honours[2]. Even if Diocletian had no immediate intention of promoting Constantine to the Caesarship at his own retirement, he at least intended him some day to take the world in hand; and all the world—especially the army—looked upon him as certain to occupy the first vacancy. With him, in public opinion, was associated the name of Maxentius, Maximian's son. The young man bore, indeed, a hardly better character than his father; but, unless there were some strong reason to the contrary, Diocletian wished kinship not to be disregarded in the succession to the throne. His intentions in this case were very plainly declared by his having given to Maxentius for wife a daughter of Galerius; for the imperial ladies were far too valuable to be spent on men not destined to the purple. At a later date Diocletian incurred the revenge of Constantine and Licinius, because (they said) he had looked too kindly on the pretensions of Maxentius. But Galerius had no relish for the appointment of the pair. Constantine he hated with all the hatred of a jealous rival. On the religious question the two and he were utterly at variance; for while

[1] Eus. uit. Const. I. xii. 2. Those who (like Zonaras) make Constantine a hostage, generally call him a hostage to *Galerius;* which is absurd.

[2] Lact. mort. 18: *eratque tunc praesens, iam pridem a Diocletiano factus tribunus ordinis primi.*

Constantine was theologically drawn towards Christianity in some degree, and most cordially echoed Diocletian's political feeling towards it, Maxentius also was disposed to befriend the Church, having the wit to oppose his father's policy in everything. Galerius had chosen colleagues who would be more supple to his will. Probably without great labour he induced the Emperor to set aside Maxentius for the present, in favour of one Severus,—a man unknown to fame, but (in spite of the debauchery which he shared with most of his contemporaries) a loyal servant and a fair captain[1]. It must have been a harder task to make the old man disannul the hopes of his own young scholar; and that, in favour of a creature so repulsive to Diocletian as the substitute whom he proposed. Lactantius, in his fancy sketch of the scene, well depicts the horror of Diocletian as Galerius introduced 'the young half-savage,' Daza. "Who in the world," he cried, "is this person whom you bring me?" Galerius answered that the sly-faced Caliban was a relation of his own[2]. The old Augustus groaned aloud. "The care of the state," he said, "cannot possibly be confided to the kind of beings you present me with." "I," said Galerius, "am satisfied with them." Diocletian felt again that he was overmatched, and acquiesced, with words of ominous warning. "You," he said, "you, on whose

[1] Id. ib.: '*illumne saltatorem temulentum ebriosum, cui nox pro die et dies pro nocte?*' '*dignus*' *inquit* '*quoniam militibus fideliter praefuit.*' Fritzsche with obvious correctness thus emends the *praebuit* of the MS.

[2] The face of Maximin on the coins is a very marked face. Of course it is needless to repeat that the account of this conference in Lactantius is not historical but dramatical: but while it was not possible for the good Father to know the exact words used, he might easily know the general drift of the arguments: what is done by kings is not easily kept secret; 2 Kings vi. 12.

shoulders the government is falling, will have to see to this. I have had toil and thought enough, that the state might stand uninjured during my own reign. If any catastrophe occurs, the fault will not lie with me."

The first of May came; and Diocletian gave up his purple, —in the presence of the army, but not to the army. The army had only elected himself because Jove had willed that it should elect him; and his successors were to reign by direct grace of Jove and of Jovius. On a high place, about three miles from Nicomedia, made conspicuous and sacred by a tall column topped with an effigy of Jove, under which Galerius had been invested with the imperial cloak, a dais had been erected. On the dais stood the Augustus and the Caesar, and with them Maximinus and Constantine. Beneath the dais stood Lactantius. As the great Emperor made his farewell oration, he was so affected by the thought of what he was resigning the world unto, that the historian saw the tears upon his massive melancholy face. He told the audience that he felt his age, that he needed rest, that younger men would do the work better than he could, that he had fixed on new Caesars to take his room and Maximian's. All eyes were fixed on Constantine; but, to the surprise of all, the names which Diocletian mentioned were those of Severus and of Maximin. The people present affected to believe that one name or the other had been bestowed for the occasion upon Constantine: but Galerius stretched his hand back behind the speaker, and fetched Daza to the front. Then, before the eyes of all, the 'veteran king[1]' stripped himself of his own laticlave, and cast it upon the shoulders

[1] Lact. mort. 19: *rex ueteranus*. It is not often that we find the word used in Latin even of this date, except in translations from the Greek.

of the thing beside him, stepped down from the dais into his travelling carriage, drove straight through the city to the port, and took ship for his native shore. The same day, though not with so good a grace, Maximian at Milan had gone through the same ceremony in the temple of Jupiter[1], and had retired to wallow in the sensual pleasures of Lucania.

It will be felt that the main interest of the persecution is gone, as soon as Diocles is settled, an ex-Emperor, in his Dalmatian villa. Constantius was now first Augustus, Galerius second. But the reign of Constantius was so short that it is impossible to say with certainty what line he took with regard to Christianity. We have no material from the West which bears distinctly on the subject; and the West is the quarter where his influence would still be most felt, for he did not follow up his advancement by removing to Nicomedia, nor even to Milan, but stayed on the scene of his old activity. I think it probable that in his own immediate provinces he left the Christian persecution where it was. He did not formally stop it. It had, from the first, in Gaul and Germany and Britain been barely more than a dead letter, and only required to be left alone to die. In Spain perhaps he had to interfere on Christianity's behalf more vigorously. Beyond these countries his power did not (except in name) extend. Even Italy and Africa, though belonging to the western half of the empire, were not beneath his rule. Eutropius, who is followed by Orosius, declares that he gave over those rich territories to Galerius. For my own part, I am persuaded that there was no formal transaction, and that the cession was not so voluntary as it would appear. But the statement contains a residuum of

[1] Incert. paneg. v. 12.

truth. The explanation is to be found in admitting the general truthfulness of Lactantius' narrative of the abdication, as I have given it above. The Caesar who was thought to be the vicegerent of Constantius, was Severus; but Severus had been nominated, not (as he ought to have been) by his own chief, nor even by Diocletian, but by Galerius. He was in fact the merest tool of his patron; and Italy and Africa, under him, were much more truly a part of the dominions of Galerius than were Syria or Egypt, which the independent Daza held. To say the least of it, Constantius had no more command in them, than Diocletian had enjoyed[1]. And so it came to pass that, in spite of what the Bishop of Caesarea says, the persecution did not fully cease in what had been the realm of Maximian, so long as Severus lived[2]. And in the rest of the empire the Christians were liable to as much inconvenience as before. It is indeed just possible that Constantius had some slight influence upon his Eastern colleagues, and that they would have given freer play to their genius had they been untrammelled by fear of him,—and, to be sure, there is evidence

[1] Eutr. x. 1: *Constantius tamen contentus dignitate Augusti, Italiae atque Africae administrandae sollicitudinem recusauit.* Orosius, vii. 25, being a Spaniard, specially notifies that Spain did not go with Africa: *Constantius, Gallia tantum Hispaniaque contentus, Galerio ceteris partibus cessit.* Eutropius' testimony is specially valuable because, quite simply, and in another connexion, he ascribes the choice of the new Caesars to Galerius.

[2] Eus. m. Pal. xiii. 12: τὰ γάρ τοι ἐπέκεινα τῶν δεδηλωμένων, Ἰταλία πᾶσα καὶ Σικελία, Γαλλία τε καὶ ὅσα κατὰ δυόμενον ἥλιον ἐπὶ Σπανίαν Μαυριτανίαν τε καὶ Ἀφρικήν, οὐδ' ὅλοις ἔτεσιν δυσὶ τοῖς πρώτοις τοῦ διωγμοῦ τὸν πόλεμον ὑπομείναντα. The good Prelate himself supplies the contradiction so far as Italy and Africa are concerned, by telling us that Maxentius first stopped the persecution, in 306 at the earliest: and Lactantius shews that Constantius did not formally do so even in his own provinces, by describing it as the first imperial act of Constantine.

that they acted more boldly on the news of his demise. But even during his lifetime no great attention was paid to his modest and legitimate desires. "Though Constantius' name was obliged to be set first," says the author of the *Deaths*, "Galerius despised him[1]." And it is hardly to be thought of that the mild monotheist approved of the earliest imperial action of Maximinus. That action was to republish, in every particular, the bloody edict of Maximian[2].

It must not be said that this republication was an insignificant act, simply because the result in actual martyrdoms was not great. In the first place, it is (I believe) erroneous to suppose that Eusebius, in his small treatise, pretends to give an exhaustive list of the Martyrs of Palestine. He tells of no palms which were not won in his sight, or at least by athletes in whom he was not specially interested. But the horrors of a persecution (God knows) do not depend solely on the numbers of the slain.

> "Fear hath a hundred eyes that all agree
> To plague her beating heart; and there is one
> (Not idlest that!) which holds communion
> With things that were not, yet were *meant* to be."

Yet it must be owned (and perhaps here we may trace the influence of Constantius) that Eusebius has but three deaths to record within that reign, and two at least take place in very extravagant circumstances of aggression. The first (which alone I shall relate) was of a young gentleman of nineteen, named Apphian, whom the Bishop describes as a 'blessed and truly innocent lamb,' the son of distinguished heathen parents in Lycia. His parents had sent him to accomplish his studies in the school of Beyrout, at that time a somewhat too seductive abode for youths who

[1] Lact. mort. 20.

[2] Eus. mart. Pal. iv. 8.

were not born ascetics. Apphian however was gifted by nature, and inspired by grace, with a philosophic temper, and 'strange to say, even at Beyrout,' proved superior to temptation; and when his education was complete, the boy determined not to return to his pagan mother, 'but taking no thought even of his daily expenses, through his hope and trust in God, was led by the Divine Spirit, like one led by the hand, to the city of Caesarea, where the crown of martyrdom for godliness was prepared for him.' The young gentleman became a member of the very household of Eusebius, and had dwelt with him the better part of a year, when the whole town was agitated to hear that the edict was to be at once enforced among them. With a boyish sense of adventure, St Apphian left the house without making any one privy to his purpose; and while Urbanus the governor was lifting his right hand to pour a libation, the audacious stripling rushed between the guards and griped him by the arm, and warned him to desist from his error, saying that no good would come to those who left the One True God and sacrificed to idols and to devils. His death was as horrible as might be expected; but the sequel of his death was less to be looked for. After many stripes and tortures, distributed over several days, the poor lad was flung half dead into the deep sea, far out from shore, and sank. The Bishop and all the inhabitants of Caesarea stand surety for that which followed. A tremendous roaring and motion of the sea immediately began, which shook the whole city; and in the midst of the strange noise and quaking of the ground, the body of the boy-martyr was seen, cast up by the indignant waters of the Levant at the very gates of the town. Calm and cold indeed must be the eye which glances on this fact

(for the *fact* need not be doubted), and scorns the fervent sympathy which took the coincidence for a miracle[1].

The martyrdom of St Apphian took place on Friday, the second of April, 306. Galerius himself since his accession had been the less active in persecuting the Christians, because he was very busy persecuting the world at large[2]. His whole attention was engrossed by the work of making the most vexatious census of his dominions in all Roman history. We may mention, by the way, in confirmation of the statement that Italy was virtually subject to him, that while it is certain Constantius gave no countenance to these oppressive 'taxings[3],' the commissioners of Severus or his Eastern master spared not even Rome itself, but goaded her to disaffection, and finally to rebellion, by their unrighteousness. But other public events were taking place, which greatly affected the Church's welfare, and which led to the total cessation of the persecution in the West, and the fearful increase of it in the East.

It is needless to tell for the hundredth time the epic story of the elevation of young Constantine—how his father, disappointed by the slight which had been passed upon his family, and fearing lest worse was to follow, wrote again and again to Galerius, beseeching him to give his son liberty to come and join him;—how Galerius one evening, having no longer any excuse to forge, put the passport in his hand, but (knowing that the journey would be for Constantine's honour, not his own) wished next morning to

[1] Eus. l. c.

[2] The particulars may be read in Lact. mort. 23, with advantage, and the latter part with amusement.

[3] Constantius' hatred of taxation was almost proverbial: it won him the nickname of *The Pauper*.

delay him;—how Constantine, expecting some such trickery, overnight, when the Augustus had gone to rest, started from the Asiatic capital and travelled as fast as the imperial post-horses could gallop right across Thrace and Illyricum, and Lombardy, and Gaul, and when the Emperor's men tried to pursue after him, lo! in all the public relays there was not a single horse that could go[1];—how the young hero found his father just sailing from Boulogne, and sailed with him, and helped him to defend our homes from the wild Picts;—how, when the north was quiet, Constantius went back to his good house at York, and fell sick, and how (as some say), a blessed Angel came and told him, as he lay dying, to proclaim his eldest son Caesar in his stead, though he was too wise and good a man to want Angels to suggest plans so obvious and right[2];—and finally how, when the messenger came to the Evil Beast and told him that the armies of the West had hailed their new master with delight, and shewed him in token the image of Constantine with a bay wreath on its head, the Evil Beast in his fury nearly pitched the image in the fire and threatened to pitch the bearer after it, but yet, in spite of himself, durst not deny what Constantine asked, and sent him back the purple robe, and acknowledged him as a Caesar under the suzerainty of Severus for his Augustus[3].

So far, all was fairly regular. That, which had undoubtedly been the design of the great Founder, and which had the emphatic (even if it were tacit) support of Constantius,

[1] Zosimus and the Anonymous historian of Valesius say that he hamstrung all that he did not want to use.

[2] This little tale comes out of Zonaras.

[3] The chief authorities are Lact. mort. 24, 25; Zos. ii. 8; Eus. uit. Const. I. xx. xxi.; Anon. Vales.

I cannot call an usurpation simply on the ground that the troops greeted it with flattering raptures[1]. But now came a trouble indeed—a trouble almost as troublesome for the student to disentangle, as it was for Galerius—now Head-Emperor—to surmount. Rome had gone mad against the taxers and their inquisition. The Emperor chose this untimely moment for breaking up the relics of the old Praetorian camp in the city. Determined to make a last struggle before allowing their once formidable name to be put out, the Praetorians rose. The old spirit of the Senatus Populusque seemed to revive when the soldiers took some of Galerius' insolent emissaries and wetted the streets with their blood. Then, by a choice admirable alike for its prudence and its venturesomeness, the insurgents took for their chief the son of their ex-tyrant Maximian, and decorated him with the purple and the title of a Caesar[2].

The insurrection of Rome was more than a mere *émeute*. No less a person than the junior Augustus was despatched, after a busy conference with Galerius, to put it down. He gathered his forces at Milan, and marched upon Rome. But the soldiers whom he led, were (as Zosimus significantly points out) the old troops which had won the victories of Herculius in Morocco, and Severus was a person to them

[1] I am not careful to defend the way in which Constantine came to the throne: but Mr Hunziker has no justification in ranking it with Maxentius' elevation, as a mere usurpation. The fact (which Mr Hunziker admits) of Constantius sending for his son, proves what his intentions were concerning him.

[2] Zosimus alone makes Maxentius himself the *originator* of the revolt, and assigns as the reason his indignation that the 'bastard' of Constantius should be an Emperor, and he not. Of course the tale is simply invented by the author's fierce hatred of Constantine. Maxentius, however, may well have done what he could to foment the disaffection both of the plebs and of the Praetorians.

unknown and of no esteem. Very possibly the mere fact that Maxentius was their old commander's son would have been enough to win their affections, at any rate when the sentimental tie was reinforced by large gifts or promises of money: but their loyalty to Severus was quite discarded when the veteran Herculius threw himself upon the scene again. That aged, but still active, prince had only retired most reluctantly, when the rough menaces of Galerius had been added to Diocletian's more diplomatic appeals; and now, whether his son or he initiated the movement, he returned with glee into the political world, robed once more with the purple, under the style of *Bis Augustus*. So profound was the effect of his name upon the imperial army, that at his approach Severus was left with but a handful of men, and felt the necessity of falling back hastily upon Ravenna, where he closed the gates and prepared for a siege. Strong as the place was, even here he felt not safe with Maximian under the walls, and fearful of treachery within the city, surrendered himself to treachery without. Herculius, no doubt, offered his kind offices as a mediator; and the unhappy Augustus, who would have scorned to give himself up to Maxentius, had no shame in laying his life in the venerable hands which, not two years before, had bestowed on him the succession. An imperial villa at the Three Taverns was placed at his disposal, and there he was interned until some agreement should be reached between the Italian and the other governments. But Severus did not live to see the agreement reached. When the news came to Galerius of the catastrophe which had befallen the first expedition, he gathered a new army, and prepared with his own doughty hand to overthrow the upstart empire and free the

captive of the Three Taverns. Without a check he advanced into the very heart of Italy, and pitching his camp at Interamna, now Terni, sent his friend Licinius and another on a peaceful ambassage to his son-in-law. The hostage was still alive, and it was necessary to proceed with moderation, lest he should be killed. Licinius held out hope on behalf of the Augustus, that if Maxentius would but ask as a favour that which he possessed as a fact, it might be granted: but the only answer to this gracious proposal which the envoys carried back, was the intelligence that the unfortunate Severus had been compelled to quit life quietly by opening the arteries of his throat. And at that instant Galerius found himself powerless to avenge his death. For some reason or another he found that his troops were on the point of deserting him. The fate of his drinking-mate and fellow-Emperor seemed likely to become his own. He found no means to check their mutinous spirit, but to lead them at once from the seductive neighbourhood of his young rival, and to give them licence to harry and ravage the whole length of the Flaminian Road as they retreated[1].

Maximian had not been present at the time when Galerius made his invasion, and was probably not cognisant of Severus' happy despatch. In the end of the year 306, he had hastened into Gaul in hope of inducing Constantine to league himself with the Italian empire against the East. It was a bold stroke; for though Constantine had come to the throne against the will of Galerius, yet he was now one of the

[1] This account has been very carefully worked out from the confused authorities. The anonymous fragment has here become a document of primary value; but in every detail, almost, it proves the extreme accuracy and minute knowledge of Lactantius.

legitimate tetrarchy, and to seek to detach him from his fidelity to the court of Sirmium meant nothing less than to contemplate the destruction of the new *régime*. And the stroke was, for the time, successful. The Roman usurpation was so strong, that Constantine did not disdain to accept from Maximian the Augustusship[1] which Severus had left vacant, and a bride; and following the example of his father, he divorced the humble wife who had borne him the beginning of his strength—the hapless boy whom he murdered later in life—and with great state married Fausta, half-sister to his father's wife, whom Maximian and Constantius alike had long intended him to marry. But at this point he paused. He did not mean to become a mere feudary to Herculius: and though Herculius besought him to fall on the retreating legions of Galerius, Constantine felt that it was not his game to annihilate so fine a countercheck to Maxentius[2].

[1] He was not recognised by Galerius as an Augustus until 308.

[2] Here again I find a very subtle, and therefore most satisfactory, proof of the authenticity of Lactantius' account. Mr Hunziker, for want of sufficient care in reading Zosimus, makes rather merry at the *Deaths*. "Lactantius (he says) makes Herculius, within the aforementioned interval, from February to November 307, go to Gaul not less than twice, the first time to induce Constantine to join the alliance against Galerius, the second time after the unfortunate attempt upon his usurping son. Now quite apart from the erroneous conception which he here betrays, that Herculius definitely shared the fruits of his son's usurpation as an usurping Augustus, the twice-repeated journey of the old man into the distant Gaul in a period of at most ten months is perspicuously too much of a good thing! Lactantius at Nicomedia may well have understood that Herculius came to Carnuntum out of Gaul, while he has the haziest views about distances in the west of the empire." But now look at Zosimus, on whom Mr Hunziker relies for his overthrow of the Nicomedian historian. The words of Zosimus are as follows:—"Then Maximian Herculius, not liking the disturbances which occupied the state, comes to Diocletian, at that time residing *at Carnutum, a Celtic city*, and attempts to persuade him to reassume empire. But Diocletian not consenting to his proposals, Herculius having failed of his attempt, and having gone as far as

In all probability about April or May, 307, Herculius returned to Rome. But he soon found that his daydream of once more holding the West in fee was not coming true. His son was not his subject: and not only so, but he found that their plans of government were entirely opposed, and that a concord such as had existed in old days between Emperors and their Heirs-Apparent was not to be expected. Herculius had ruled despotically from Milan: it had been part of the Jovian system to degrade and enfeeble Rome, to take away her military importance, to ignore her Senate. Maxentius was a Roman, whether in heart, or by policy, it matters not. From first to last, his was a Roman, and a popular, rule. He had received his own authority as much from the choice of the plebs, as from that of the guards[1]. When he invited his father's counte-

Ravenna, *went once more over the Alps*, to meet Constantine who was residing there: and being naturally a busy faithless fellow, after promising him his daughter Fausta and fulfilling that promise, he endeavoured to seduce him and persuade him, on the one hand to pursue Galerius as he withdrew from Italy, and on the other hand to conspire against Maxentius.....While this was still in the handling, Galerius makes Licinius Emperor, intending him to conduct a war against Maxentius." Now this is very confused, but one thing at least is clear,—that Zosimus knew of *two* journeys into Gaul before the elevation of Licinius (which took place at the congress of Carnuntum, Nov. 11, 307): having heard of some meeting of Maximian and Diocletian at *Carnuntum* (near Presburg), and being better acquainted with *Carnutum* (Chartres) in Celtic Gaul, he supposes that Diocletian was living in Gaul, and that Maximian's first journey thither was to meet him there: and then in describing the second visit to that country he huddles together the business that had taken place on the first and on the second occasion—the two widely different plans proposed by Herculius—before and after the quarrel with Maxentius. It is a fitting sequel that, immediately after, this exemplary historian makes Herculius die of disease at Tarsus in Cilicia, confounding him with Maximinus Daza. Thus every effort to invalidate Lactantius' testimony only ends in corroborating it.

[1] Eus. orat. Const. xxii. 1: ὁ δῆμος προείλετο προστάτην. The popular rule turned before long (as often happens) into a frantic tyranny.

nance and coadjutorship, he persuaded (if we may trust a silly orator) the Senate to take the matter up. Once more upon the reverse of his coins reappears the old she-wolf, with Romulus and Remus at her dugs, to typify that the Eternal City was still the mother and protectress of kings. His little son bore the name of the first king and founder of the town. And one step he took, in accordance with the character of his government, which is of extreme importance to the Church historian, and to which repeated reference has been made already. He wished to be popular:—a sure way to be popular was to reverse all that Herculius had done in the days of his first empire:—there was nothing which had more signalised Herculius than his cruel zeal for the Christian persecution. "Maxentius," says the Greek historian, "began his reign by feigning our Christian faith to curry favour with the people of Rome, and in that region, assuming a form of godliness, gave orders to his subjects to drop at once the persecution against the Christians[1]." Constantius had had no power to stop the persecution, but now it was definitely, entirely, authoritatively stopped. The Pope who, according to a late tradition, had been set the task of grooming Maximian's horse, now sent Deacons to the Prefect of the City, with warrants from Maxentius and his Prefect of the Praetorium, to reoccupy the property which had been taken from us in the time of the persecution[2]. It was not likely then that Maximian and Maxentius could pull harmoniously under the same yoke. The chasm

[1] Eus. hist. eccl. VIII. xiv. 1: *ἀρχόμενος μὲν τὴν καθ' ἡμᾶς πίστιν ἐπ' ἀρεσκείᾳ καὶ κολακείᾳ τοῦ δήμου καθυπεκρίνατο, ταύτῃ τε τοῖς ὑπηκόοις τὸν κατὰ Χριστιανῶν ἀνεῖναι προστάττει διωγμόν, εὐσέβειαν ἐπιμορφάζων.*

[2] See the accusation of the Donatists against Bishop Melchiades, in Aug. brevic. d. iii. c. 34.

between the two widened daily. At last the final rupture came. Herculius summoned to a conference the soldiery who had deserted Severus for him, and invited also the attendance of the Roman populace. He was announced as intending to state his ideas on the great burning question of the government. Suddenly, at a climax in his oration, he turned with stretched hands to his son and colleague, who was beside him on the platform, denouncing him as the author of all the calamities under which the empire groaned; and becoming more hot as he went on, he grasped the purple robe and tore it from Maxentius' shoulders. Vain and mistaken old man, he believed himself still to be the idol of the troops, and hoped that his deed would be hailed with acclamations. But Maxentius knew better. Shaking himself from his father, he leapt boldly out from the high platform and fell among the soldiers, who caught their popular young prince with enthusiasm. Amid the angry clamour of the multitudes, Maximian was justled out of Rome, and might well thank heaven that he was allowed to reach uninjured the French court and his new son-in-law[1].

And Diocletian during all this turbulent period was gaining new health in a quiet country life, and trying to shut his ears to the din of his fabric breaking up. Yet even in his retreat, he was not suffered to forget the cardinal error of his life,—that 23rd of February, when, sick and nervous, he had bowed to Galerius' will, and consented to a course of action which he knew to be unjust. The persecution haunted him. There has been preserved a naïve and most interesting narrative of one occasion,—possibly one of

[1] Lact. mort. 28.

many,—when he was compelled, in his private life, to take part unwillingly in administering the bloody statute of Herculius. The facts recorded belong to the year 306. It would hardly be possible to set in a more amiable light the eager interest of that master mind about matters of art, the frank kindliness of his intercourse with his simple workmen, which makes the reader think how tender must have been his relations with his martyred chamberlains,—his outburst of disgust with the "philosophers" who forced him to notice that his favourite craftsmen were guilty of Christianity. Diocletian is every inch himself.

"It was when Diocletian the Augustus came to Pannonia, to be present at the opening of divers quarries in the hills. And it was so, when he gathered together all the stone-masons, that he found among them men filled with great skill in their art, Claude, Castory, Symphorian, and Nicostratus, marvellous men in the stonecutter's art. These men were Christians in secret, and kept God's commandments, and whatsoever piece of work they did in their carving, they carved in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And it fell out on a day, that Diocletian the Augustus ordered the artificers to take all their tools and carve out of Thasos stone an image of the Sun with his four-horse chariot—chariot and horses and all out of this same stone. So at that time, all the artificers thinking the thing over with the philosophers[1], began to design the fashion of the piece, and after they had hewn a great block out of the Thasos quarry, the piece of carving suited not according to the

[1] The word *philosophus*, according to Ducange, is sometimes used simply to denote a sculptor: but here, no doubt, it means an official position,—the scientific workmen who superintended the ordinary quarry-slaves.

order of Diocletian the Augustus. And there was emulation many days among the artificers and philosophers. Now on a certain day all the artificers came together, in number six hundred and twenty two, with five philosophers to try the lie of the stone, and they began to look for the veins of the stone. And there was wonderful emulation among the artificers and philosophers. At that time Symphorian, trusting in the faith which he held, said to his fellow-workmen, 'I beseech you, brethren all, trust me, and I will find out the lie of this stone, with the men of my gang, Claude, Simplice, Nicostratus, and Castory.' And finding a vein of marble, he began to carve the piece in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the carving had good success according to the order of the Augustus. The carving that was made was of an image of the Sun, twenty-five foot long. And this was declared to Diocletian the Augustus, and he rejoiced. And the same hour he gave command to build in that part of Pannonia a temple in a place which is called Ad Montem Pinguem, and there he erected and placed the statue, and gilded it, and began to make merry at that place with sacrifices and ointments and perfumes, and gave great gifts to the artificers. At that time Diocletian the Augustus rejoiced in their handicraft, and being seized with exceeding great love of it, ordered that the columns or the chapiters of columns should be cut by the artificers from the Porphyry quarry. And he called to him Claude, Symphorian, Nicostratus and Castory, and Simplice, whom lifting with gladness from the ground he said to them: 'I wish to have the columns or chapiters of columns cut from the Porphyry hill by no workmanship less skilled than yours.'

"And they, having heard it, departed straightway from the Emperor with a multitude of artificers and with the philosophers. And coming to the Porphyry hill, at a place which is called Locus Igneus, they began to hew a stone of forty foot long. Now Claude used to do everything, at which he worked, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and his handicraft succeeded: but whatsoever Simplice, who was a Gentile, did, was not convenient. But on a day said Nicostratus to Simplice, 'Brother, how is it that thy chisel breaks?' And Simplice said to him, 'I pray thee, temper the chisel for me that it break not? Claude said to him, 'Give me every tool of thy craft.' And when he had given him all his iron instruments of carving, Claude said, 'In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, be this iron strong and sound to work withal.' From that hour Simplice began to work all his squaring work with his own chisel well and rightly, even as Symphorian did. Then Simplice with wonderful desire and zeal began to enquire of Symphorian what was the manner of the tempering, that his tools and chisels never brake, whereas before it was not so. Symphorian said to him with Claude, 'Dost thou, brother, marvel then at the tempering of the chisels? The God who is Creator and Lord of all hath strengthened his own handiwork.' Simplice answered, saying to Symphorian, 'Yea, hath not the god Jove himself made all things?' Claude answering said to him, 'Brother, do penance, for thou hast blasphemed, not wotting what thou sayest. The God whom *we* confess, He created all things, and Jesus Christ His Son our Lord, and the Holy Ghost. For the god whom thou speakest of, wherefore seest thou not that he is carved forth of our own hands? Knowest thou not that

the very Sun whom we made by our art of carving is himself nothing?' That very day, while they were debating among themselves, lo on a sudden Diocletian the Augustus ordered that they should cause to be hollowed for him out of the Porphyry quarry, conches[1] adorned with figures. Then Symphorian, Claude, Castory, Nicostratus, began in the Lord's Name to hollow the conches and basins with figures and stoups, with great subtilty of workmanship. But whatsoever tool Simplice took in his hand to work withal, anon it brake. Then said he to Symphorian: 'I adjure thee by the Sungod, tell me who's the God that created all things, in whose Name ye do your work so well.' Claude answering said to Simplice: 'Art thou pleased with that which we do in the sight of thine eyes?' Simplice answered and said: 'I see your works; but I know not the lore which ye teach secretly day by day. Now declare to me, I entreat you, this lore of your God, that I may enjoy full friendship with you.' Claude said to him: 'And is thy friendship unfeigned?' Simplice said: 'Unfeigned indeed: for yourselves also know, lo these fifteen years how I have worked with you.' Symphorian said to him: 'If thou canst believe, we will tell thee, and thou wilt both soon gain skill, and also have eternal life.' Simplice said: 'I have earnestly longed to know about your God, and I beseech you.' Claude said to him: 'Behold, this is what we tell thee, that thou must believe faithfully our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and receive Baptism, and all things shall be supplied unto thee.' Simplice said: 'Well then, delay not, that I may be at one with you, in work and in religion.'

[1] A conch is a big ornamental receiver for the water of a fountain.

And they began to seek about for a Priest, and they found a Bishop bound in custody, Cyril by name, brought from Antioch, kept in chains for the Name of Christ, who had been now tormented with many stripes for three whole years[1]. To whom coming by night, Symphorian, Claude, Nicostratus, and Castory, together with Simplice, they found him fast bound in irons with many other confessors, and entering in unto the blessed Cyril, they threw themselves at his feet, and besought him to baptize Simplice. And when the blessed Bishop Cyril heard it, he was filled with great joy and said to Simplice: 'Son, see that thou believe with all thy heart, and all things shall be given unto thee.' And Claude, Symphorian, Nicostratus, and Castory, answering told him the thing which had come to pass concerning the tools. And then the blessed Bishop Cyril giving thanks to Almighty God said to Simplice: 'Son, thou hast seen a deed of power at thy work: only believe faithfully.' Simplice answered with tears and said: 'And how would ye have me shew my belief?' The blessed Bishop Cyril said: 'That thou shouldest believe on Jesus Christ our Lord, the Son of God, the Creator of all, and that thou shouldest renounce all images made with hand.' Simplice said: 'I believe in truth that Jesus Christ is Very God.' And when he had made him, according to Church custom, a catechumen, he baptized him there in the prison, in the

[1] This is the grand proof of the historical character of the piece. Eusebius (hist. eccl. VII. xxxii. 2, 4) mentions Cyril as Bishop of Antioch in his time (ὁ καθ' ἡμᾶς) but knows nothing of what became of him; and says that the persecution reached its height under his successor:—because the height of the persecution was not till Maximin's accession. Of course Cyril was imprisoned under the Second Edict. If he had been imprisoned three years, this incident must fall in 306 at the earliest. It is of great interest as shewing to what distances the Prelates were transported.

Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and sent them away."

The five good masons, now in full communion with each other, went back to their work, and again used the blessed Sign at every moment, but so openly now that the 'philosopher,' or *gaffer*, under whom they worked, observed the gesture, and accused them of practising magic,—an art then in high and rising repute. Claude denied the charge, and in the altercation which ensued, it came out that the men were Christians; and several of the artificers who had listened to the dispute were disposed to throw in their lot with a religion whose effects were so visible. The piece of work was finished, and brought before Diocletian, who sent them a bountiful reward, and delivered a large order for more sculptures, with the express command that the five were to superintend the business. The philosophers were very jealous and indignant, but could not countermand Diocletian's own orders: so Claude and his company set the gangs to work, and began themselves to work among them. But when the philosophers objected to their having any share in this attempt, after being already enriched, they departed, and undertook a carving of their own, and within a third of the time taken by the rest, produced a very fine column. On hearing of their success, the Augustus expressed himself overjoyed with the men's cleverness, and ordered the five to be presented to him in person. "To whom he said with joy: 'By the power of heaven, I will make proud men of you with riches and presents, only go on carving figures out of this Porphyry hill.' And he bade them make Victories and Cupids, and conches again, and above all an Asclepius.

"And they made the conches, Victories and Cupids; but the image of Asclepius they made not. So after certain days they brought their works, adorned in divers ways with figures. Diocletian was pleased as before with the skill of their carving, and the Emperor said to Claude, Symphorian, Nicostratus, Castory and Simplice: 'It makes me happy to see how zealously you work, but why have you not shown your love of me by carving the Asclepius, the god of all health[1]? Go on quietly, and pay your attention to making this statue, and then make some lions spouting water, and eagles and stags and representations of different kinds of creatures.' And they did all, in their own fashion —except, of course, the statue of Asclepius. So after four months the philosophers made their report to the Augustus Diocletian, that he might see the works of the artificers, and he bade them all be brought and exhibited in a field. And when they were all brought, there was no Asclepius presented according to the order of the Emperor Diocletian. And when the Emperor with exceeding eagerness asked for that, the philosophers reported saying: 'Most gracious Caesar and Ever-Augustus, who lovest all men and art the friend of peace, be it known to thy clemency that these whom thou lovest are Christians, and whatever has been commanded them, they do it in the Name of Christ.' Diocletian the Augustus said to them: 'If all that they do in their Christ's Name is notoriously magnificent, I see no harm in it, but on the contrary great credit.' The philosophers answered saying: 'Thou knowest not, Most Gracious,

[1] In this devotion to the god of health it is impossible not to see the pathetic gratitude of a convalescent. It would not have shewn the masons' *love*—only their obedience—to have carved any other figure.

that they in their horrible guilt, do not obey thy grace's order: they have refused to let the magnificence of their art be employed on the erection of the god Asclepius' image, or to exhibit a statue of him.' Diocletian the Augustus said: 'Let those men be brought to me.' And when Claude, Symphorian, Nicostratus, Castory and Simplice, had been called, the Emperor said to them: 'You know that our clemency has loved you with kindness and favour, and I have cherished you with a close affection. Why did you not obey our commands to carve the god Asclepius from the Porphyry quarry?' Claude answered and said: 'O gracious Ever-Augustus, we have always obeyed thy grace and served thy nobleness; but an idol of a poor sorry human being we will never make: because it is so written, They that make them are like unto them, and so are all they that put their trust in them.' Then the philosophers burst forth against them, saying to the Emperor: 'Most gracious Emperor and Ever-Augustus, thou seest their treason, how loftily they speak to thy grace.' Diocletian the Augustus said to them: 'I cannot have my skilful artificers reviled, but encouraged.' To whom the philosophers answered: 'Then let them do the bidding of thy grace, or we will find men who will do according to the will of your clemency.' Diocletian the Augustus said: 'And are there men to be found who are more learned than these for skill in this art?' The philosophers said: 'We will procure men who have the support of religion.' Diocletian the Augustus said: 'If you find men who will make the god Asclepius out of this Porphyry quarry, then these men shall suffer a penalty for sacrilege, and the others shall be great in the sight of our clemency'."

The statue was put in other hands, and finished, and presented, but when Diocletian came to inspect it, the work was so inferior that "he wondered, and said: 'Is this the handiwork of the same men who pleased us so much by their cleverness in sculpture?' The philosophers said: 'Most sacred Emperor and Ever-Augustus, let your clemency take note that those whom your serenity calls most skilled in stone-cutting, that is, Claude, Symphorian, Nicostratus, Castory and Simplice, are sacrilegious Christians, and that through their magical incantations all mankind is being humbled under them.' Diocletian the Augustus said: 'If they will not obey lawful commands, and the words of your report are true, let them bear the penalty of sacrilege.' And he ordered a certain tribune named Lampadius to give them a fair and favourable hearing, saying: 'Try them by a fair examination, and let any one who bears false witness against them be visited with the penalty that would fall on the accused.' At that time Lampadius the tribune ordered a judgment-seat to be got ready there, before the temple of the Sun, and all the artificers to be called together, and Symphorian, Claude, Nicostratus, Castory and Simplice, and the philosophers; to whom Lampadius the tribune said publicly: 'Our lords the most gracious Emperors have given this order, that we should find the truth between the philosophers and masters Claude, Symphorian, Castory, Nicostratus and Simplice, and make it plain whether the accusation between the parties was a true one.' All the masons cried out for envy, being urged on by the philosophers, saying: 'By the health of the most gracious Caesar, away with the sacrilegious men! away with the sorcerers!'

"But Lampadius the tribune, seeing that the artificers only cried out for jealousy, said: 'The case is not finished yet: how can I give sentence?' The philosophers said: 'If they are not sorcerers, let them adore the Caesar's god.' And straightway Lampadius the tribune ordered Symphorian, Claude, Castory, Nicostratus and Simplice, saying: 'Adore the Sungod so that you may destroy the philosophers' line of argument.' Who answering said: 'We never will adore the work of our own hands, but we adore the God of heaven and earth, who is Potentate and Emperor for ever and eternal God, even the Lord Jesus Christ.' The philosophers said: 'There! you know the truth: report this to our lord Caesar.' Then Lampadius the tribune ordered them to be thrust into the public prison. And after nine days, having obtained a quiet moment, he reported the matter to Diocletian the Augustus. That same day the philosophers also accused them, persistently saying in jealousy to the Prince: 'If these shall escape, the worship of the gods will die out.' Then Diocletian the Augustus said: 'By the great Sungod, if they will not in the end sacrifice to the Sungod according to antient custom, nor listen to our advice, I will consume them with divers exquisite punishments.' Soon Lampadius the tribune ordered them to be brought to trial another day, at the same place, before the temple of the Sun. Lampadius the tribune said: 'Bring in both parties, the philosophers and the masons.' When they were brought in, Lampadius the tribune said: 'Let their accusers come and say what blame they have to find with them.' And when the philosophers came in, one of them, Chrysolite the philosopher, said to the tribune: 'Why do you seek to find out further, what your intelligence has already learned?'

Lampadius the tribune said to Claude, Nicostratus, Symphorian, Castory and Simplice: 'Are you aware what the most gracious princes have ordered?' These five said: 'We know not.' To whom he said again: 'That you must sacrifice to the great Sungod and pay honour to the antient divinities.' Claude answered: 'We give honour to Almighty God and to our Lord Jesus Christ, His Son, in whose Name we have always hoped, and believe that out of darkness we have come into the light.' Lampadius the tribune said: 'And what light is so clear as the great Sungod's?' Claude answered, saying: 'Christ who was born by the Holy Ghost of Mary the Virgin, who lighteneth every man coming into this world, who is the true light, where there is no darkness at all.' Lampadius the tribune said to them: 'I beg you, and I warn you, do not waste all this love and all this favour of our lord the prince, Diocletian Ever-Augustus. You yourselves know too well for me to tell you, that our most gracious prince is so kind to all men that he honours them all with as much affection as brothers or sons, but especially the worshippers of the gods.' Symphorian together with his comrades said: 'The most gracious prince ought to have so much care for men as to see that they do not offend the God of heaven, who is the Creator of all things. For we are careful that we perish not in the world to come, where the fire is not quenched.' Then Lampadius the tribune, considering the command of Diocletian, again reported the matter to Diocletian. Then Diocletian the Augustus, considering their skill, instructed Lampadius the tribune, saying: 'Henceforth if they will not consent and sacrifice to the great Sungod, whip them with scor-

pions; but if they consent, bring them to the presence of our clemency.'

"Now after five days Lampadius sat again in the same place before the temple of the Sun, and ordered them to be brought in by voice of herald, and showed them instruments of fear and all kinds of tortures. And when they were come in, he thus approached them, saying: 'Hearken to me, and escape the tortures, and be ye dear friends of the noble princes, and sacrifice to the great Sungod. For I may no longer speak to you with sweet words.' Claude answered in one breath with his fellows, saying with great boldness: 'We are not afraid of your terrors, neither are we broken by your blandishments, but we fear rather the torments eternal. For let Diocletian thy Emperor know this, that we are true Christians, and never depart from the worship of our true God.' Then Lampadius the tribune was wroth, and commanded them to be stripped then and there, and punished with scorpions, while a herald's voice cried: 'Despise not the bidding of the princes.' But in that same hour Lampadius was seized with a devil, and plucking himself in pieces died sitting on the judgment-seat[1]. His wife and family hearing this ran to the philosophers with great crying, so that the news came to Diocletian. Now when Diocletian the Emperor heard it, he was wroth exceedingly, and, full of great fury, said: 'Let leaden coffins be made, and let them be shut up inside alive, and thrown into the river.' Then a certain advocate Nicetius[2], who was assessor to Lampadius, did what Diocletian had bidden:

[1] I will be at no pains to apologise for this statement, which invalidates nothing in the rest of the story, but beg leave to refer the reader again to p. 142.

[2] Diocles himself has not the right.

and he made leaden coffins, and shut them all up inside alive, and ordered them to be thrown into the river. But the holy Bishop Cyril, hearing this while he was in prison, afflicted himself and passed to the Lord. And the holy martyrs suffered for the Lord's Name on the sixth day before the Ides of November[1]."

In such artistic employments as these Diocletian was passing his time, and in employments homelier still, as we shall see. Perhaps he had with him the library, which had been a matter of interest to him even in the days when Bishop Theonas wrote concerning him[2]. And he was certainly enjoying still the consolations of a friendship which he had formed in early days with the family of Flavius Vopiscus[3]. But affairs of state were again to be obtruded on him. By the end of the year 307, matters had arrived at such a pitch of confusion, that the men who were responsible for the public disorders had recourse to the old wise man whose advice they had spurned but three or four years back.

[1] This story has no real connexion with the Four Crowned Saints, though it forms the chief part of the book containing that legend. It has received great attention lately, and well deserves it. Wattenbach has edited the text, with an elaborate archaeological dissertation by Benndorf, and a chronological dissertation by Büdinger, in the third volume of the *Untersuchungen zur Röm. Kaisergeschichte.*

[2] When Gibbon writes of him (II. 175): "The amusements of letters and devotion were incapable of fixing the attention of Diocletian"—he oversteps the bound of cautious truth. Of his devotion we have spoken at large. That he was not devoid of literary interest is clear not only from the Epistle of the Alexandrian Patriarch, and from the fact that he was a historical student. On the very first occasion of his coming forward publicly, he comes with a quotation from Virgil on his lips. It must be remembered that he was not, like Galerius, a cowherd to begin with, nor even, like Constantius, of a military stock. His father was a freedman who followed the literary profession of a scribe, or secretary.

[3] See p. 93.

Galerius, who was at Carnuntum on the Danube frontier, sent an urgent message requesting the presence of his father-in-law[1]. He wanted to be told what action to take with regard to the usurpation in Italy. Severus had now been dead at least ten months, and yet neither Maximin nor Constantine had been preferred legitimately to the place he had evacuated. The question was, whether it would be most prudent to yield to necessity, as Diocletian himself had done while Carausius lived, and to admit Maxentius, in spite of past faults, into the imperial circle, or to try whether a third attack on his position would fare better than the two first. Uninvited, as it appears, and unexpected, old Maximian broke in upon their deliberation, fresh from his successful intrigue with Constantine, whom he had induced to join a league for quelling his now-hated son. How the different members of that august conclave conducted their arguments, we do not know: we are not even informed directly that there was the least disagreement between the views of the trio: for there were no reporters present. But thus much is certain, that all difficulty would have been at an end if Maxentius had been recognised; and that on *some* occasion Diocletian expressed himself so decidedly in favour of the claims of the Roman pretender, that neither Constantine nor the new Emperor Licinius ever forgave him for it: and no occasion seems so likely to have elicited this avowal of Diocletian's adhesion to his first design as the Council of Carnuntum[2]. Next we may observe that the

[1] The meeting was not of Diocletian's making; cf. Lact. mort. 29: *aderat ibi Diocles, a genero nuper accitus.* The name of the place may be extracted from Zosimus' blunder, and is given correctly in Idatius' Chronicle.

[2] Aur. Vict. epit. 39: *increpabatur Maxentio fauisse et Maximino.*

one practical outcome of the congress was an act entirely subversive of Diocletian's system of succession: in the presence of Diocles as well as of Herculius, Galerius made his old comrade Licinius Emperor of the West, in the full-blown honours of an Augustus, without the germinal probation of the Caesarship. It is inconceivable that the man should have given his tame assent to a measure so revolutionary, so foolish, so retrograde. The immediate effect of the measure was easy to prophesy. To content the actual Caesars, the name of their dignity was cheaply altered, and instead of being Caesars any more, they were styled the Sons of the Augusti. But it was not less galling to be the 'Son' of Licinius, than to be his lieutenant: and missives soon came — early in 308 — from Maximin, to say that, at some great review of the oriental troops, he had been hailed as an Augustus. So soon does a diplomatic tampering with the succession lead to forcible usurpation. Galerius could not gainsay the claim any longer, and admitted both Daza and Constantine to the highest rank of all[1]. And Diocletian must have foreseen all this from the beginning. He found that his advice had been asked, only to be rejected contumeliously. He had been invited to Carnuntum, only to see his fine scheme for the world's government definitely set aside, never to be revived again[2].

[1] Lact. mort. 32. Fritzsche most unfortunately substitutes the name *Maxentius* for the *Maximinus* of the MS., misled by the phrase *in campo Martio proxime celebrato:* but the phrase itself shews that no local name is meant, and I think Tillemont suggests the right interpretation.

[2] It will be observed that Lactantius gives no hint that the appointment of Licinius was otherwise than agreeable to Diocletian, nor indeed do any of the scraps of information we possess about this congress say more than that the appointment was made in his presence. But it is one thing to be present, and another to approve. Twice before I have shewn that Galerius pre-

But though neither of the Maximians had enough veneration for their benefactor's wisdom to submit their own good pleasure to its dictates, they were keenly aware that in the eyes of their subjects their respective policies would look vastly better, if they could but cajole Diocletian into a seeming support. Maximian was conscious that his re-ascension of the throne was a great crime. It taxed the wit of the shrewd rhetorician who pronounced the marriage oration of Constantine and Fausta, to find reasons why *he* should be Emperor again, while Diocles remained a private gentleman. He wished to cover the enormity of his transgression by making Diocles a participator in it. We are not told what were the pleas he urged,—whether it was now against Constantine or Galerius, against Maxentius or Maximin, that the perfidious old plotter intreated him to combine,—but at any rate he had the vulgar impudence to tempt his friend once more with those sweets of empire which his friend had once and for ever unregretfully forsworn. And Galerius too, whether in concert with Maximian or apart, was himself anxious now—so the younger Victor records—to implicate the retired Augustus once more. Doubtless he wished men to think (as most men have thought) that the new Emperor who had been raised in Diocletian's presence had been raised by Diocletian's suffrage. Galerius wished Diocletian to be again an Augustus; but this time an under-Augustus, a moral prop to his own throne. But Diocletian, who had been willing in 305 to work a little longer for the world, while there was still some reasonable

ferred his own wisdom to that of his father-in-law; and I feel fully justified in claiming this meeting of Carnuntum as a third case.

hope of bringing order back, and had then been rudely rebuffed by Galerius, would not now return to a task at which younger men recoiled in dismay,—and that, simply to colour with his name the acts of a despot whose conduct he abhorred. The honour which these maladroit courtiers would have flattered him into accepting was as distasteful to him, as though they had offered him the plague. No words of Diocletian's are so widely known as those in which he declined the humiliation. "I should like you," he said, "to see the kitchen garden where I work at Salona: you would, I am sure, acknowledge that your proposals contain no charm[1]."

Yet in spite of Diocletian's peremptory and sarcastic refusal to play the part of second Emperor to his son-in-law, he was, by an audacious fiction, made to reign. Galerius, or Maximin, or both, did not scruple to take his name in vain, and claim his sanction for important laws of which he probably never heard, or (if ever) heard of with disapproval. Witness the well-known edict against 'Malignants and Manichaeans,' in the consideration of which we come back to the religious affairs of the Roman empire. Without any qualms of misgiving we may date the edict from Alexandria, March 31st, 308, instead of referring it as previous authors have been content to do, to the year 290[2].

[1] Aur. Vict. epit. 39: *qui dum ab Herculio atque Galerio ad recipiendum imperium rogaretur, tamquam pestem aliquam detestans, in hunc modum respondit, 'utinam Salonae possetis uisere holera nostris manibus instituta; profecto numquam istud temptandum iudicaretis.'* This is the only place in which it is directly averred that Galerius joined in offering to restore Diocletian, but besides its inherent probability (now that Galerius had found out the hardships of empire) the fact is pretty well proved by the inscription of the Manichaean Edict which follows.

[2] Baronius—and strangely enough

"The Emperors Maximianus, Diocletianus, and Maximinus, most noble Augusti, to Julianus, Proconsul of Africa. Times of perfect repose sometimes encourage men to transgress against the common condition of human nature, and move them to introduce certain most vain and disgraceful kinds of superstitious doctrine, in order to display their power of dragging about multitudes of disciples at the beck of their own deluded fancy, O well-beloved Julian. But the immortal gods have deigned by their providence so to order and arrange the things which are good and true, that, by the research and treatment of many good and notable men, and great men of science, they should be proved and established indefeasibly: which dogmas[1] ought neither to be assailed nor resisted, nor should an antient 'religion' be found fault with by a new. For it is a most serious offence, to recast what antiquity has once for all established and defined, and which still has and holds its own position and current influence. Wherefore we have an extreme zeal to chastise the perverse obstinacy of such worthless persons:—those, to wit, who set up their paltry new-fangle and unheard-of sects against the antient 'religions,' so as to cut off (for the gratification of their perverse wills) what has been bestowed upon us aforetime from heaven. As for the Manichaeans, touching whom your prudence has reported to our serenity, we have heard that they have come into this realm but very recently, like some strange unexpected portents, from a starting-place and origin in the race of our enemies the Persians; and that they here commit many crimes; that they disquiet peaceful populations,

Hänel in the teeth of his text—place it in 287; Neander (without cause assigned) in 296. Beausobre does not mention it.

[1] Or possibly 'which men.'

and also bring much mischief into the cities: and it is to be feared lest (as is usual) in time to come they should attempt, by the execrable customs and hideous laws of the Persians, to infect (as it were) with their malignant poisons men of a more innocent nature, the modest and tranquil nation of Rome, and the whole circle of our empire. And forasmuch as all these things, which your prudence declares in your report on their religion, are shewn by you to be subtly invented and planned modes of doing most palpable harm, therefore we appoint for them pains and penalties such as are due and condign: viz., we command (1) that movers and ringleaders, together with their abominable writings, be subjected to the severer penalty of being consumed with flames of fire; (2) we enjoin that partisans of theirs who carry their contention to that extreme, suffer capital punishment, and we sanction the seizure of their goods for our imperial treasury; (3) if, however, any who have actually held office[1], or are of any rank and are distinguished persons, have apostatised to this unheard-of and degraded and in every way infamous sect, or to the doctrine of the Persians, you shall cause their patrimonies to be added to our treasury, and themselves to be committed to the Phaenian or Proconnesian quarries. To the end, therefore, that this bad wickedness may be radically cut off from this most blessed age of ours, your devotion will make haste to obey our tranquillity's commands and statutes

[1] This distinction between official and non-official reminds one of the First Edict, on which some parts of this rescript seem modelled. But here we see Galerius unfettered. There is no clause *rem sine sanguine transigi*. Probably Diocletian would not have cared to shed Manichaean blood, any more than Christian. The burning of the books is certainly a hint from the same quarter. Several of these little touches are far more easily explained when we consider this edict to be subsequent, not prior, to the antichristian edicts.

with all promptitude. Given at Alexandria, the day before the kalends of April[1]."

The principles which dictated this longwinded rescript, would certainly lead to a similar treatment of the Church. Christianity was not indeed a 'new religion,' in the sense in which Manichaeanism was. It was 300 years old. It had received formal sanctions. Men had forgotten the old slanders against it. Narseus and Sapor had not been its nursing fathers. Its arithmetical size made a strong practical difference between itself and the little sect of Manes. Yet it showed no signs of the age, or rather the decrepitude, which was so visible on the front of paganism. It was quick with that tiresome youthfulness which would not let men be; it was not conservative for conservation's sake; it did 'find fault with the antient religions' and with the foul sin which had shot up under them, like toadstools under the gloomy darkness of the forest. The true Catholic, with all his reverence for authority, does not know the doctrine that dogma may 'neither be assailed' by frank investigation, nor its stealthy encroachments 'resisted,' or that 'recasting of antient institutions and definitions is a crime.' All that he claims is thoroughness and honesty. If then the principles expressed in this rescript were logically developed, Christianity, as well as the Persian doctrine, would come beneath the ban[2]. And, as a matter of fact, the mind which expressed itself thus against Manes, was doubtless the same which in 303 expressed itself against Christ. But we have yet to learn that that mind was the mind of Diocletian.

[1] I have translated the text in Hänel's admirable edition, but even there the original is so corrupt that one is forced to construe on (so to speak) across country.

[2] See p. 74, n. 3.

It has been shewn conclusively in the third chapter of this work that the persecution of the Christians originated entirely with Galerius and his friends. And Galerius and his friends must answer for this Manichaean edict also. A mere glance at the title of it is enough to prove it. About a third of the laws in the Code of Gregory are laws of Diocletian and Maximian Herculius. Law after law begins with the words, *Impp. Diocletianus et Maximianus AA.* The order in which the names appear never varies; for Diocletian was the senior. Suddenly we find one rescript in which the name of Maximian stands first. It is useless to try, with Baronius, the effect of changing *Maximianus* into *Marcus;* for the Emperor Diocletian's real name was Gaius. And then, following the name of Diocletian, stands the name of Maximin. As Maximin only became a Caesar to fill the gap made by Diocletian's abdication, it becomes clear that the date of this edict is subsequent to 305, when Diocletian retired. The Maximian, therefore, is without doubt the junior of that name, Galerius. But further:—Maximin was not a mere Caesar when this edict was issued, for not only do the Caesars' names never appear in the titles of laws of the period, but the letter *A* in this case stands three times over,—showing that Diocletian's system had already broken down and that there were three Augusti (at least) in the world. This was not the case till the year 308. But how comes Diocletian, now a private man, to be named at all in the superscription? The most natural answer is that which has been given above. Galerius, unable to stem the tide alone, had implored the aid of Diocletian. Though Diocletian had positively refused the penitent supplication, Galerius pretended that his suit was granted, and that Diocletian was reinstalled as a coadjutor

Augustus[1]. He made believe that the thunderbolt which fell on the Manichaeans was winged by the same Jovian hand which he had constrained to bruise the Church. Yet who knows whether Galerius was not clear after all? The letter is dated from Alexandria, the most important city in Maximin Daza's realm. Maximin Daza, the Platonists' friend, was no stickler for truth in the concrete. Perhaps the man who forged the Acts of Pilate, may have forged the names of Diocletian and of Galerius too[2].

[1] Of course Galerius' name would stand first, as being (this time) Diocletian's benefactor; Diocletian's next, as his brevet was supposed to date from Carnuntum; Maximin's last, as becoming Augustus only in 308. Tillemont (Empereurs IX. 170) shows that Maximin was recognised as such in Illyricum early that year. The omission of the names of Constantine and Licinius is easily accounted for by supposing that the edict was only intended for the Eastern world, with which they at this time were unconnected.

[2] In fairness I must state that the Ambrosian Hilary, who wrote in the 5th century, refers to this edict, and ascribes it to Diocletian. He is showing how modern a sect Manichaeanism is in comparison with Catholicism, inasmuch as St Paul (1 Tim. iii. 1 foll.) prophesies of it as of a thing not yet in existence, any more than Arianism, and corroborates his statement by Diocletian's account of its rise and progress: *quippe cum Diocletianus imperator constitutione sua designet, dicens: 'sordidam hanc et impuram haeresim, quae nuper' inquit 'egressa est de Perside.'* (The words are not an exact quotation from the edict in the form in which we have it.) But the author of course does not investigate the question of the direct authorship of the edict: if Diocletian's name was introduced at all (as it was) in the heading, his would be the name selected for mention as being the best known. I may add that Diocletian would certainly acknowledge the argument drawn from the difference in age between the religions, as fully as Hilary. There is one little hitch in the proof however. Africa at this time was no more subject to Maximian and Maximin, than Parthia or the moon. If it was not entirely subject to Maxentius, it was only because the insurrection of Alexander (308—310) had already begun. Alexander never attached himself to any of Maxentius' foes; so that an authoritative epistle from Alexandria to Carthage would be as impossible during his reign as under Maxentius. It is not known whether Anulinus held the African proconsulate all throughout these usurpations, but he held it both before and after. The easiest way out of the difficulty, perhaps, is to suppose that *Africae* is a mistake; possibly for *Armeniae*.—The Rev. P. H. Mason

But the religious energy of the Eastern Emperors was not expended in 308 upon the Manichaeans alone. They had not done with us. We had tasted plentifully of their harshness, but we had still to taste the yet more cruel draught of their tender mercies. The number of martyrs had swollen into so long a list that even Maximin became alarmed. It was impossible for the work to go on steadily at such a pace as it had done in 306 and 307[1]. So the ensuing year was ushered in with what is popularly thought a relaxation. From the words of Eusebius we are to believe that it was the imperial will—even if unexpressed in an imperial decree—that capital punishments should become rarer[2]. Maximian, in all probability, concurred with Maximin. But the order to try any other measures rather than behead, was the signal for atrocities to begin that were worthy of Zeïbeks and Bashi-bazouks,—atrocities that might even have woke the incredulity of a British Government. Hardly near Sophia or Philippoli could one see a more dreadful sight than Eusebius saw at Caesarea. Ninety-seven unfortunate Christians, men, women, and even young children, arrived one day in that city, to be distributed by the governor

has shewn me some rabbinical stories in which *Dioclut* is claimed as a persecutor by the Jews also, but that illustrious Hebraist assures me that he does not think the tales have any historical value, or were ever intended by their authors to claim any.

[1] Among the martyrdoms witnessed by Eusebius in 307 was that of the blessed Virgin St Theodosia of Tyre, *πιστὸν καὶ σεμνότατον κόριον*, not yet 18 years of age. Some prisoners were seated before the tribunal confessing their faith, when the young saint approached them 'to shew them kindness, and (as was seemly) to entreat them to remember her when they came to the Lord.' After very dreadful tortures they threw her, alive and glad, into the sea.

[2] Eus. mart. Pal. viii. 1: *ὡς ἂν ἐκ βασιλικοῦ νεύματος*. The words occur in connexion with the atrocity mentioned below. Cf. hist. eccl. VIII. xii. 8.

Firmilian among the mines in his province. The reason of their coming was, that in the vast mines of Thebais, from which they came, there was not sufficient 'accommodation'[1] for the Christian prisoners. Whether Firmilian feared lest they should be as cramped at Phaeno, and wished to thin their numbers before they went, is uncertain: but when the poor wretches started again there was not one who had a right eye, nor even a right eyelid to conceal the ghastly orifice;—and each one had had the left foot disabled by searing the ancle-sinews with red-hot iron. And about the same time came into use an ingenious, though not so tragic, kind of dissuasive from Christianity. This *Evidence of Paganism* (if the phrase may stand) was named in the hangman's slang the *Siphon*. The reason why it is mentioned here is not a love of horrors, but a desire to mention with honour a confessor—thank God she did not prove a martyr—of Alexandria, upon whom it was tried;—a confessor who deserves the deepest gratitude of all Biblical students, and of Englishmen in particular. The trial which she endured consisted in being stripped to the skin, then smeared with honey, and thus left for a day or so tied up in the glaring street for the benefit of the flies and wasps. The lady's name was Thecla; and, at the time when she underwent this maddening test, probably in the year 308, she had but half accomplished her grand task of copying out the magnificent Greek Bible, which Cyril Lucar gave to King Charles the Martyr, which lies now in the British Museum, under the name of the *Codex Alexandrinus*[2].

[1] See the remarkable answer to a question asked by Mr Forster in the House of Commons, July 18, 1876.

[2] See the Coptic Acts in Ant. Georgius' *Fragmentum Evang. S. Ioannis Graecocoptothebaicum*, p. cviii. foll.

It is perhaps worth while to hazard a conjecture whether this so-called relaxation was not possibly—like the title of the Manichaean Edict—a result of the Congress of Carnuntum. There is not the slightest evidence for the conjecture, except that the relaxation followed so soon upon the meeting of Galerius with Diocletian. Galerius was really alive to the fact that the empire was in a critical condition, or he would not have sought the meeting at all: and it is hardly likely that the meeting would pass off without the great Christian question being mooted. At any rate, precisely the form which this concession to the Church assumed, was a kind of return to Diocletian's first idea of persecution,—that no lives were to be destroyed. Did Diocletian urge this return? Did he allow his name to stand with Galerius' and Maximin's in the superscription of the letters which bespoke it? Did this suggest the thought of adding it also in the ungentle edict against the 'Malignants and Manichaeans'? Of course to assert this would be ridiculous, but to deny it entirely would be rash.

Matters, however, did not come back to the state in which they were in 303. Diocletian's First Edict had not been backed by a general command to sacrifice; it only punished men with losses of rank and liberty, more or less heavy, whenever Christianity happened to be proved upon them. Now, though they were not to be killed, they were to be sought out with diligence still, and (by way of variety) mutilated instead. Not that martyrdoms during this lull were unknown. Eusebius saw one poor Nun burnt, whose crime was that, seeing a fellow Nun first ordered to the brothel and then *scraped* to death upon the hobby, she cried out from among the crowd, "And how long do you mean

to torture my sister so savagely?" One Paul, at the same place and time, was beheaded; who, being obliged by the executioner with a few moments for prayer, prayed first for the peace of the Church, then for the conversion of the Jews, then (it is a curious point) for the Samaritans; and then for the Gentiles, the judge, the Emperors, and the hangman. But these were exceptions. The relief, on the whole, was undeniable. "The conflagration," says Eusebius, "subsided, as though it were quenched with their streams of sacred blood." His friends and he began to draw their breath. It appears as if mercy had advanced so far, that the poor maimed creatures in the Thebais were positively allowed to scramble forth into such liberty as was still possible for them[1].

But hardly had the Christians begun to congratulate each other, when the storm burst on them afresh. A new edict appeared, more stringent than ever. Fragments, or fragmentary descriptions, of it appear in several of the extant Acts of Martyrs. In the Passion of Saint Theodorus of Amasea we learn, what we should otherwise have only guessed, that Maximin did not issue the edict alone, but joined, or was joined by, Galerius[2]. However the uncle and nephew may have disagreed on other points, they were quite at one in hating Christians. "How it came about, or what stirred him," writes the Bishop of Caesarea, "I know not, but he to whom Providence had given the power to persecute, burst

[1] Eus. mart. Pal. ix. 1.

[2] Surius, Nov. 9: *Maximianus et Maximinus imperatores emiserunt decretum in universam terram quae parebat eorum imperio, ut omnes gentes, quae credebant piae religioni Christianorum, si execrandos cibos gustassent, salui essent, qui autem contra dicebant, traderentur iudiciis.* There can, I think, be no doubt that this is the same edict as that mentioned in the text.

aflame once more. Letters against us from Maximin sped again simultaneously, in all directions, into every province. The presidents, and not only they but the Prefect of the Praetorium also, in edicts and rescripts and public proclamations, egged on the mayors in all the cities together with the captains of garrisons and the town-clerks, to bring to a final issue the imperial edict, which commanded, (1) to re-erect with all diligence the idols which had fallen, (2) to make all males, universally, with their wives and household servants, and even their children in arms, sacrifice and pour drink-offering, and to take special pains to make them actually and unmistakeably taste the accursed sacrifices, and (3) to pollute well all the articles for sale in the market with libations from the sacrifices, and to station sentries at the doors of the public baths in order to pollute with the abominable sacrifices all who went to wash in them[1]."

It would be inaccurate to say that this Fifth Edict (if

[1] Eus. mart. Pal. ix. 2 : *τὸ βασιλικὸν εἰς πέρας ἄγειν πρόσταγμα, κελεῦον, ὡς ἂν μετὰ σπουδῆς πάσης τῶν μὲν εἰδώλων ἀνοικοδομοῖεν τὰ πεπτωκότα, πανδημεὶ δὲ πάντας ἄνδρας ἅμα γυναιξὶ καὶ οἰκέταις καὶ αὐτοῖς ὑπομαζίοις παισὶ θύειν καὶ σπένδειν, αὐτῶν τε ἀκριβῶς τῶν ἐναγῶν ἀπογεύεσθαι θυσιῶν ἐπιμελὲς ποιοῖντο, καὶ τὰ μὲν κατ' ἀγορὰν ὤνια ταῖς ἀπὸ τῶν θυσιῶν σπονδαῖς καταμολύνοιντο, πρόσθεν δὲ τῶν λούτρων ἐφεδροι κατατάσσοιντο, ὡς ἂν τοὺς ἐν τούτοις ἀποκαθαιρομένους ταῖς παμμιάροις μολύνοιεν θυσίαις.* Neither Eusebius nor the Acts mentioned in the last note distinctly mention death as being reimposed—perhaps it had never been really taken away—as a penalty for final resistance. But the Acts of St Varus (Bolland Oct. 19, p. 428) give the edict thus : *ὥστε πάντας τοὺς χριστιανοὺς ἐπιθύειν τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ ἀπολύεσθαι, τοὺς δὲ ἀντιλέγοντας τοῖς προστάγμασι* (*qui autem contra dicebant*, see last n.) *μετ' αἰκισμῶν καὶ βασάνων ποικίλων ξίφει καὶ πυρὶ ἀναιρεῖσθαι.* The very valuable Acts of St Acacius (Boll. May 8, p. 291) say the same : they also confirm Eusebius' statement that the edict was specially sent to the military as well as civil officers. The phrase in these last Acts : *cum tertio diabolus turbinem commouisset, sub Maximiano Diocletiani genero*, implies, I think, that Diocletian's edicts were considered as *one* attack, the Fourth Edict as the *second* attack, and this as the third.

so we may call it) was worse than any of the foregoing. But there is in it a thin bitterness, a venomous spitefulness, which may be noticed as characteristic of all the later part of the persecution. This spitefulness is due to two main facts. The first was, that Paganism was becoming conscious of defeat; the Church had not yielded a single point. The second fact was, that the Church had no longer to deal with the sensible statesmanlike hostility of Diocletian,—not even with the bluff bloodiness of Maximian. Galerius himself was now, except in name, no longer persecutor-in-chief. He was content to follow the lead of a man who was in all ways even worse than himself. Galerius was indeed an Evil Beast; his nephew was more like the Crooked Serpent. The artful, sour spirit of Maximin employed itself to invent —not large measures of solid policy against his feared and hated foes, but petty tricks to annoy and sting them. Like those who make vinegar out of generous wine, he associated with the new school of Alexandrian philosophers, and used their wit and knowledge for his vile purposes of religious hectoring. From this time forth we shall find the persecution taking more and more a colour derived from books and bigotry, rather than from statecraft and knowledge of the world. An *odium theologicum* begins to dictate the edicts; and any one who carefully compares the periods, will find that almost every feature in the behaviour of Julian the Apostate towards his former co-religionists is imitated and developed from what was done in the days of Maximin Daza and his philosophical adviser Theotecnus.

To have *any* meat thrust into the mouth against the will, to know that in *any* way the goods bought in the market have been previously mishandled, to be sprinkled with *any*

liquid without leave given, is sufficient to arouse indignation, sometimes even to provoke an active revenge. A mere heedlessness about small conscientious scruples was enough to engender the Indian Mutiny. But when these liberties are taken in the name of religion, taken with the avowed design of degrading a man (if possible) in the eyes of the Deity he worships, it naturally makes the blood in the man's veins run scaldingly. In the face of edicts such as these we cannot wonder that the Christians learned to detest Maximin with a fiercer detestation than even the Antichrists before him,—that St Gregory should speak of the names of Diocletian, Galerius, and Maximin, as forming a progress and a climax in cruel wickedness[1]. Nor is it strange that even pagans, who stood by and saw their fellow-men's freedom thus ungenerously stolen from them, should have condemned the edict which ordered it, in terms of unbounded reprobation. They themselves did not care to have so much of their religion: the government was going too far[2]. When the fair young Febronia of Nisibis was being tortured for refusing to obey the imperial orders, the heathen mob turned away from the hateful scene, shouting for damnation on the Emperor and his gods[3].

It was indeed a reign of terror which now began, and which did not cease until the end of the year 310. Moments

[1] See the expression quoted on p. 68, n. 1.

[2] I have quoted their sentiments on p. 91.

[3] Acta Sanctorum, June 25, p. 26. I should be loth to seem ungallant, but I cannot help thinking that the lady—Thomais by name—who wrote the account, and professed to have had it all from the judge's own lips—(he was converted)—has sometimes been imaginative rather than historical. She has been under a mistake about the reign in which the occurrence took place, and has brought Diocletian's name into the tale.

there were of comparative quiet; it could not but be so; for even the flaming sun has spots which cool it, and the very trough of the waves is a shelter from the raving wind. Late in 309, the confessors in the copper-mines of the Holy Land had the rash security even to erect rooms in which to meet for worship. But there was perhaps as much of defiance in the act as trust in the favour of the tribune. At any rate the reprieve was not authorised, as in the spring of 308. There was no favour from the Emperor. Directly the fact was made known to him, an imperial rescript ordered the companies of captives to be broken up,—some to Cyprus, and some to Lebanon[1]. Two Coptic Pontiffs who were among them, with two other distinguished disciples, were burned alive to terrify the rest. To give a minute description of this period would be impossible. Those who wish to form some picture of it, must read the concluding chapters of Eusebius' pamphlet on the Martyrs. I cannot fill these pages with descriptions of the mad enthusiasm which made Priests of Christ rush with shrieks upon the proconsuls as they sacrificed, to scare them from their error;—how blessed Virgins, adorned with the fillet of their profession, were whipped, more than half-naked, up and down the streets of the metropolis;—how (for the first time in this persecution) the corpses of the martyrs were no longer disposed of in any way, neither burnt nor thrown into the sea, but guarded night and day, till birds and dogs had strewn even the interior of the town with the sickening relics;—how (though Eusebius himself declares that ambitious men took occasion by the demoralized state of the fraternity to set up schisms

[1] Eus. mart. Pal. xiii. 2: ὡσὰν ἐκ βασιλικοῦ προστάγματος.

and to usurp sees) Asclepius the arch-heretic, and Peter Absalom the orthodox boy-anchoret, burned together brother-like;—how excited visionaries, when asked their names, refused even to say Apollodorus or Serapion, lest they should seem to acknowledge these dumb devils for deities; and, when asked of their cities, would answer, "Jerusalem (a name geographically extinct), the great City of all the Faithful towards the Rising Sun," filling the judge with fears of some vast conspiracy;—how gangs of believers began to march up and down the empire, from Egypt to Cilicia, visiting the colonies of confessors, and occasionally falling into the hands of the Government and becoming food for the lions;—how, unrebuked by the higher powers, the local authorities transgressed their jurisdictions in the good cause of repression, and assumed against Christians powers of life and death which they might not have used against any other men. It is not the intention, either, of the present volume, to celebrate the high names which won distinction in these days of blood. Martyrdoms have only been recorded which exemplify principles, or vividly present an aspect of the time: and though far the greater number of those who are set down as 'Martyrs under Diocletian,' won their crowns during these few years which I have been last reviewing[1], those who would know about them must seek elsewhere. I have said nothing of the way in which the persecution drew St Anthony into the town, and drove St Hilarion into

[1] Mr Hunziker seems to agree with this view: see pp. 229, 231. In judging of the date of Oriental *Passiones*, the following kinds of details may be taken to show a *late* date, in proportion as they are more prominent and more in company together: offers of preferment, especially religious preferment, to renegades; pollutions such as those commanded in the Fifth Edict; theological conversations (e.g. in the trial of St Acacius the judge tries to prove the

the wilderness. It is for want of room, and not of reverence, that I leave Peter of Alexandria, and Methodius of Tyre, and Silvanus of Gaza, Cosmas and Damian and Euphemia and Julitta, and even the great Pamphilus himself, as unmentioned as I have left Vincent and Sebastian and Pancras, Agnes and Afra[1].

But I cannot resist the desire to insert one more trial, because it has so peculiar a flavour of its own,—the trial and condemnation of a learned and philosophical Bishop, from a fragment of whose works we have quoted a striking line or two at the end of the fifth chapter. The Acts of St Phileas of Thmuis exhibit emphatically (what none of our other specimens shew) two well-bred literary *gentlemen* as prisoner and judge, and recognising each other for gentlemen. Culcian, the friend of Maximin[2], had something of the same kind of Scriptural knowledge as Hierocles had: and he would not use tortures to persuade the Pontiff who was his fellow-scholar, his brother-Platonist.

"Phileas being placed in the dock, Culcian the president said to him, 'Can you bring yourself now to a sober mind?' Phileas answered, 'I am at all times sober-minded: my habits are sober.' *Culc.* Sacrifice to the gods. *Phil.* I do not sacri-

absurdity of our faith by saying that if we worship God and Christ we have more than one God); arguments drawn from the personal history of Christ; the name of *Galilaeans*. In fact the Acts of St Theodotus in my appendix are typical of the *later* Passiones, though they are really early; the explanation being that *Theotecnus*' personality becomes more and more stamped upon the whole persecution as time goes on.

[1] Some of the legends of SS. Sebastian, Agnes and Pancras have been worked up into a tale called *Fabiola*, by the late Dr N. Wiseman, titular Bishop of Melipotamus. It contains a great deal of interesting information about the Catacombs, and shews a very pious intention; but history is not mirrored in its pages, nor human nature.

[2] Eus. hist. eccl. IX. xi. 4.

fice. *Culc.* Why so? *Phil.* Because the sacred and divine Scriptures say: He that offers to any gods but to God alone shall be rooted out. *Culc.* Offer a victim then to God alone. *Phil.* No: God does not want such sacrifices. The divine Scriptures say: Why do ye bring Me the multitude of your sacrifices? I am full of holocausts of rams and the fat of lambs, and I will not have the blood of goats; offer Me no fine flour.—But one of the advocates said, 'Does fine flour form any part of your case, may I ask? or are you pleading for your life?' Culcian the president said, 'With what sacrifices then is your God pleased?' Phileas answered, 'With a clean heart, and an unsophisticate intellect, and the sacrifice of truthful speech God is pleased.' *Culc.* Offer now. *Phil.* I do not offer: I never was taught it. *Culc.* Did not Paul offer victims? *Phil.* God forbid. *Culc.* Did not Moses offer? *Phil.* To the Jews and them only command had been given, to sacrifice to God alone, in Jerusalem: and the Jews now do wrong in celebrating their sacred rites in other places. *Culc.* A truce to these idle words. Pray sacrifice even now. *Phil.* I will not defile my soul. *Culc.* Do you mean that we are risking our souls? *Phil.* Both soul and body. *Culc.* This body? *Phil.* This body. *Culc.* Will this flesh rise again? *Phil.* Yes.—Culcian said again to him, 'Paul denied Christ, did he not?' *Phil.* God forbid. *Culc. I* have sworn the oath; now do you swear too. *Phil.* We are bidden not to swear. The sacred Scripture says, Let your yea be yea and your nay nay. *Culc.* I am sure that Paul was a persecutor. *Phil.* No: God forbid. *Culc.* Paul was no scholar. Was he not a Syrian, and disputed in Syriac? *Phil.* No; he was a Hebrew, and disputed in Greek; and he had the sublimest philosophy, that ever man had. *Culc.* Oh, perhaps you will

aver that he excelled even Plato. *Phil.* He was wiser than not Plato only but all the philosophers put together. He made even wise men converts, and if you like I will tell you some of his discourses. *Culc.* Come, sacrifice. *Phil.* By no means. *Culc.* Have you any conscience? *Phil.* Yes. *Culc.* Why then are you so careless and unconscientious towards your children and wife? *Phil.* Because God's claims upon the conscience are supreme. The sacred and divine Scripture says, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God who made thee. *Culc.* What God's that? Phileas spread out his hands toward heaven: 'God who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is: the Creator and Maker of all things visible and invisible; God the inexpressible, who alone is and abideth for ever and ever. Amen.'

"But the advocates, at many points when Phileas was addressing the president, prevented him, saying, 'Why do you withstand the president?' Phileas replied, 'I do nothing but answer the questions he asks me.' *Culc.* You must be tired of speaking: come and sacrifice. *Phil.* No, I cannot. My soul is what I care for. Christians are not the only people who care for their souls. You remember the example of Socrates, how, when he was led to death, though his wife and children stood by, he would not turn back, but took the deadly decoction quite readily. *Culc.* Was Christ a god? *Phil.* Yes. *Culc.* What makes you think he was a god? *Phil.* He made the blind to see, the deaf to hear; He cleansed the lepers, raised the dead, restored speech to the dumb, and healed many sicknesses. A woman with an issue of blood but touched the fringe of His garment, and was made whole. When He was dead, He rose again; and many other signs and wonders He did. *Culc.* And God was crucified! *Phil.*

He was crucified for our salvation. But He knew quite well that He was to be crucified, and to suffer shame; and He gave Himself to endure all for us. And these things had been foretold about Him in the Holy Scriptures, which the Jews think they hold, but they hold them not. Any one who pleases may come and see whether these things are not so. *Culc.* You recollect that I have paid you a compliment. I might have used you roughly in your own city, but I wished to pay you a compliment, and forbore. *Phil.* I am deeply indebted to you, but I beg you to complete the favour. *Culc.* What is your wish? *Phil.* Use all the violence at your command. Do what you have been ordered to do. *Culc.* Do you want to die when there is absolutely no cause for it? *Phil.* There is a cause; God and truth demand it. *Culc.* Was Paul a god? *Phil.* No. *Culc.* What was he then? *Phil.* A man like us; only the Divine Spirit was in him, and by the Spirit he did mighty works and signs and wonders. *Culc.* I make a present of you to your brother. *Phil.* Nay, complete the favour I asked; use all your violence, and do as as you have been bidden. *Culc.* If I knew you were in want, and that *that* had driven you out of your mind, I should not spare you thus; but you have plenty of wealth; you are rich enough to support nearly the whole province, not yourself only; so I spare you, and want to persuade you to sacrifice. *Phil.* I cannot sacrifice: I say it in self-defence.—The advocates said to the president, 'He *has* already sacrificed, in the house of correction.' *Phil.* I did not sacrifice: that is certain. *Culc.* Your poor wife is making for you. *Phil.* The Lord Jesus Christ is the Saviour of all our spirits, whom I serve in bonds. He who has called *me* into the heritage of His glory, is able also to call *her*. The advocates said to the president,

'Phileas asks for a remand.' Culcian said to Phileas, 'I grant you the remand, that you may consider with yourself.' *Phil.* I have considered many a time, and have elected to suffer for Christ.—The advocates and the clerk, together with the mayor and with all his relations, embraced his feet, beseeching him to have regard for his wife and to think of providing for his children. He, as if it were a wave beating on an immovable rock, rejected their prattling words, and in his heart aimed heavenwards, and kept God before his eyes, and said that he ought to hold the Martyrs and Apostles for his parents and his kin.....

"The judge ordered him to be slain with the sword. And when they had gone out of court, and were on the way to the usual place of execution, the brother of Phileas, who was one of the advocates, cried out saying, 'Phileas asks to have his sentence revoked.' Culcian calling him back said, 'Why have you appealed?' Phileas answered, 'I did not appeal; God forbid. Do not pay heed to this most unhappy person. Nay, I acknowledge my extreme obligation to the Emperors and to my lord president, for letting me be made a joint heir with Jesus Christ.' After this Phileas went forth[1]."

In a fine paragraph of one of his printed discourses, Professor Mozley has spoken of the surpassing interest with which men regard action performed just before death. "All that a man does," he says, "upon this extreme boundary of vision appeals to us; what he said, or did, how he looked, his expressions and signs upon the verge of that moment awaken our curiosity; it seems as if he were *in* another world, when he was so *near* one. So in war," he continues, "there is just that conflux of splendid action upon the very edge of

[1] Ruinart, p. 434.

life, which rouses curiosity and emotion; the figures move upon the extreme line of a shifting horizon, in another instant they are below it; yet the flame of energy mounts the highest upon the moment of the eclipse. There is a miraculous outbreak of power and will, which gathers all into a point; then all is over, and the man is gone[1]." And this is what has made the records of martyrdom so fascinating, so stimulative. The book has still to be written, which shall set before ordinary English folks those genuine Acts of the Catholic Martyrs which are their most inspiring and most imperishable reliques: and until the memories and sayings of those who have died in battle for our faith are more known and cared for in our Churches,—until our enthusiasm has been more kindled than at present by witnessing the marvellous vitality which the threat of death evoked from them,—the Church is guilty of not directing to noble purposes that craving for romantic sensation which the Creator has seen fit to make so strong within us.

But the time is now come to turn again from these scenes of persecution. The end is coming into sight. Eight years had passed away since the morning on which St George tore down the First Edict at Nicomedia, when another edict of a very different tenour was posted in the same place. What those eight years had been to the Church, no human language—as the two historians who lived through them well protest—is at all adequate to express. During that period the sufferings of Christendom had not (of course) been kept up to the average of their keenest moments of anguish: this would have been impossible: but the intervals between the sharpest bursts had been filled with that dreary aching inse-

[1] University Sermons, *War*, p. 122.

curity which is worse to bear than the energy of pain. If anything could ever possibly prevail against the Church, the Church would not have survived the first decade of the fourth century; and the inscription forged at Clunia would have been her epitaph, if ever she could have needed one. In that time, the total forces of the known world, gathered in the one person of 'the Prince of this World'—that Roman Emperorship which was almost a synonym for Satan—had spent themselves upon her. True, the popular voice had not been against her: but the people was as nothing: the army, which was everything, and the executive, the whole overpowering machinery of Government, had been brought to bear upon her with dogged pertinacity. The moment had been chosen, when the imperial power (by Diocletian's statecraft) was the most secure and the best concentrated. Nor was it only that the force used to batter the Church was the most massive ever collected in human history. That force was directed with more scientific sagacity than was ever used, before or since, for a kindred purpose. It was a small matter that the subtle dialectic wits of the whole Alexandrian school were engaged in refining short and easy methods for dealing with the Christians, and that, while our progenitors were being persecuted in the law courts, they were being written against in the phrontisteria. The great point was that the whole vast sum, of main force, of political mechanism, and of learned argument and skill, was originally directed and set to its work by one of the five or six greatest men who have breathed the earth's atmosphere, by the very Solomon of Rome, Diocletian himself. And yet the effect of it all upon the Corporation in which God has embodied universal truth, can only be compared to what is seen by the visitor to some

great iron works, when a mass of metal weighing many tons is dropped a score of feet upon a coil of steel spring, which the beholder expects to see ground into sparks; and the spring tosses it back into the air, and dandles it lightly, and suffers it gradually to subside. The Church, without dreaming of an armed resistance (for the winning of our souls is promised only to our patience), had completely conquered; and the very document which the Emperors headed with the pompous list of their military successes and with the arrogant title of *Invicti*, is nothing in the world, from beginning to end, but an abject, grudging, cynical confession that they had tried to cope with the Church and had been beaten.

There was one of the foremost authors of the persecution who was unable to set his hand to the recantation. Maximian the elder was no more. In his latter days he had forfeited utterly the loyal character he once bore; and his desultory planless intrigues had brought—though not so soon as might have been expected—his grey hairs to the grave. The chapters in which Lactantius paints the last scenes of his life, stand unrivalled even in their author's works, for graphic effect and grim saturnine humour. From the Council of Carnuntum Maximian had returned again to Gaul. There he had already made one attempt, during Constantine's absence in Germany, to resume the purple which, in all probability at Carnuntum, he had been compelled a second time to doff: but the attempt was but a fiasco: Constantine had returned in haste, and driven Maximian into Marseilles, and while the old man stood on the town wall showering down curses on his son-in-law, the townspeople had opened the gates behind him, and surrendered him to justice. That time, however, he had found but mercy. Constantine made them unfrock

him, and gave him a lecture and his life. But in 310 Maximian was guilty of a more criminal design. Calling his daughter, he endeavoured to cajole her into a plot against her husband's life. It was agreed that Fausta should not kill the Emperor with her own hands, but ensure to Maximian a facile access to the apartment, where he was to conduct the affair himself. When all was arranged, the Empress, a better wife than daughter, laid the plans before the intended victim. On the night agreed, the sentries were few and far between; but Maximian, to make all safe, accosted them, showed who he was, said that he had seen an evil dream which he must tell the Emperor instantly. He entered the bedchamber, dagger in hand, plunged the weapon to his satisfaction into the breast of an unlucky eunuch who had been doomed to occupy his master's couch, and as he was leaving the room in exultation, fell into the hands of Constantine and his armed guards. There was no possibility of defence, and the utmost that could be indulged to the old man who for twenty years had had but one superior in the world, was the liberty to adjust for himself the noose in which he was to hang[1].

And Galerius himself barely lived to see his recantation published. In the year of Maximian's death, 310, he had begun to fall under a secret disease, engendered, or at the least fostered, by his unstinted pampering of his appetite. That obscene cancer, in process of time, developed into the malady which either the severity of Almighty God, or else the sensitiveness of men, has (as it were) kept for great persecutors. Like Antiochus Epiphanes, like Herod in the Acts of the Apostles, like Alva's master and Mary's husband, the corruption of the

[1] Lact. mort. 29, 30.

grave, and the vermin which feed upon corruption, claimed impatiently the colossal and bloated form of Galerius, before the spirit had left it[1]. The agonies of this living death found voice in one of the most bizarre state-documents that was ever penned. In it a few days before he expired[2] he restored Christianity to its privileges: but the restoration is couched in language treacherous, contradictory, and sour with the most virulent hatred. Galerius is full of remorse, and full of terror. He believed in our God, in the same way as the Christians believed in his. His tortures seem to him to be the vengeance of the Christ whose disciples he had wronged; but he lays the blame upon the Christians, because they had forsaken Christ. The dying Emperor shows no penitence, makes no confession, except of his impotence. He wishes to dupe and outwit the angry Christ, by pretending to be not a persecutor but a Reformer. With a curse, he dashes his edict of toleration in the Church's face, and hopes superstitiously that it will win him an indemnity. This extraordinary manifesto is best described in the terse epigram of

[1] Eus. hist. eccl. VIII. xvi. 3 foll., Lact. mort. 33, Aur. Vict. epit. xl. 4, Anon. Vales.

[2] The edict was posted at Nicomedia, April 30th, 311: in May (13th?) came the news of Galerius' death. Hunziker, for obvious reasons wishing to suppose it a mere piece of melodrama to date the palinode from Galerius' deathbed, tried to make out that the edict was issued in 310. He has since corrected himself, but without acknowledging the careless oversight on which his error was founded. Constantine and Licinius, he said (p. 238, note), are named as consuls in the heading, while Galerius is 'distinctly called proconsul': now Constantine and Licinius perhaps held their first consulship in 310: in 311 *Galerius* was consul, for the eighth time, with his nephew. But in fact in the same heading both the junior Emperors also are called proconsuls (for some odd reason) as *well* as consuls: and *most* distinctly Galerius is spoken of as ὕπατος τὸ ὄγδοον. This is conclusive, even if there be some difficulties about the numbers of the years of the respective reigns. The edict was put forth in the 8th consulship of Galerius, i. e. the year of his death, 311.

the noble French Catholic historian. "Singulier document," cries M. de Broglie, "moitié insolent, moitié suppliant, qui commence par insulter les chrétiens et finit par leur demander de prier leur maître pour lui[1]."

After rehearsing in full all the titles of Galerius, of Constantine, and of Licinius, and attributing to them some score of conquests apiece, the proclamation begins: "Amongst the other schemes which we are for ever framing for the use and profit of the state, we for our part had sometime been minded to reform all things after the antient laws and public discipline of the Romans, and to take order that the Christians also, who had left the persuasion of their own fathers, should return to a good disposition: forasmuch as, by logic of a peculiar kind, so great wilfulness had entered into the said Christians, and such folly had possessed them, that they would not follow those very instructions of the antients which had peradventure been first established by the said persons' own forefathers, but according to their own private judgment, each man after his own caprice, and on no other principle, they made their laws for themselves, and these they observed, and congregated in separate places dissenting assemblies. In brief therefore, when a decree of ours had been set forth to that effect, that they should betake themselves again to the institutions of the antients, many persons were put under jeopardy, many also utterly crushed down[2]: and when the majority of them persevered in their resolution, and we saw that the said persons neither displayed to the gods the worship and reverence that was due, nor paid heed to the God of the Christians, we, in consideration of our

[1] *L'Église et l'Empire*, Vol. I. p. 182.

[2] Eusebius' version adds 'and endured all kinds of deaths.'

most humane clemency, and having regard to the invariable use by which we are wont to accord mercy to all mankind alike, have thought best in this case also to extend our most prompt indulgence; that Christianity may once more be practised, and that they may build their conventicles, on condition that they do nothing to break the discipline. And we are about to signify to the judges in another despatch, what rule that is that they are to observe[1]. Wherefore, over against this our indulgence, it will be their duties to pray to their GOD for our good health, and the health of the state, and of themselves, that on all sides the state may be found in good condition, and that they may be able to live without anxieties in their own homes[2]."

It is vain to hope that any light will fall from this strange proclamation, back upon the cause of the persecution. It is Galerius who speaks, not Diocletian: and though Diocletian would never have persecuted but for Galerius' passionate insistance, yet he ordered the persecution (during its first year) to his own taste, and with his own ends in view. Nor indeed is the Galerius who speaks here, the same Galerius who stormed up and down the council-room at Nicomedia in 303. *That* Galerius was, by eight tempestuous years, a younger man; he had never felt by experience, never realized by a knowledge of history, how arduous a task he was undertaking; he was full of enthusiastic confidence in the religion which gave so generous a licence to his passions. *Now* he lay disappointed, utterly defeated, half living man and half worm-

[1] It is a pity we have not these instructions to the judges. We shall have more to say presently about this letter and the important modifications of Christian liberty implied in this *discipline*.

[2] Eus. hist. eccl. VIII. xvii, Lact. mort. 34.

eaten corpse, and as horribly convinced as either of his Christian biographers that he was writhing under the scourge of Christ. Yet nothing is further from his thoughts than to make a clean breast of it or acknowledge his change of views.

If indeed the statements contained in the edict are true, and Galerius is really taking the Church into his confidence before he asks her prayers, we certainly have some remarkable facts before us. The Emperor, when he lit the first fires, was but setting to action the Church's own song of *Ecce quam bonum*. He saw with grief our unhappy divisions and their danger. It has been the special work of the genius of Rome in all ages to insist upon a hard material unity; and this was, in earlier days, the chief ground on which the empire attacked the Church. It regarded Christianity as the embodiment of sectarian spirit. Celsus' definition of the essence of Christianity was, factiousness pure and simple[1]. But now, if Galerius does not lie, the old quarrel with Christianity as such was forgiven or forgotten. Not a word was said against the Church's peremptory absolutism, her incompatibility with heathendom, her refusal to set other state gods on any footing of equality with her Spouse. The Church indeed was still as exclusive as ever: but, if the Emperor is to be believed, the persecution was not intended to bring her to terms with paganism,—for her legal position, as one of the institutions of the ancients, is apparently acknowledged,—but to reduce the schismatics into unity with *her*. Galerius was not offended because Catholic Popes and Patriarchs ruled over multitudinous hosts who would willingly kick or bespit or burn the objects of his own ardent devotion; but because some self-willed fanatics rejected

[1] Orig. c. Cels. iii. 10., quoted by Keim, see next note.

the established form of Christianity, refused allegiance to Anthimus and Melchiades and other princes of the *Corpus Christianorum*, and had built themselves dissenting chapels. The much-misinterpreted sovereign, for eight years past, had had nothing in view but the triumph of the true Church, and regarded his successive edicts, which had led to such unfortunate results, as so many Acts of Uniformity!

But the lie is barely masked. If Galerius lamented that all Christians alike had fallen from the purity of the original faith, why did he persecute professed reformers like the Novatianists and Marcionites? Why did he not summon a Council of the Divines whom he supposed to be most nearly orthodox, and make himself the first Emperor to impose a symbol? If, on the other hand, unity was all he wanted, why did he not follow Aurelian's example, declare himself for the main body of believers, for the Pope and the Italian Bishops, and lay severe penalties on Dissent? Unfortunately we find no trace of men being asked on trial, whether they were primitive Christians, or members of some Protestant sect. It was of course Catholic blood chiefly that was being shed on every side like water. But in truth, the unhappy persecutor himself in these same few lines points out his transparent deception. He acknowledges that all Christianity alike had been proscribed, by granting permission for men to profess that religion once again,—*ut denuo sint Christiani*[1].

[1] Dr Keim, who creates Galerius the exponent of his own opinion that the Christianity of the fourth century was not the Christianity of the first, contends (Baur and Zeller's *Theol. Jahrb.* 1852, p. 212) that the object of this edict was to effect voluntarily, what the persecution had failed to effect by force, a reformation of the Christians. He persuades himself, therefore, that the clause *ut denuo sint Christiani* is not part of the concession, a fresh toleration of Christianity,—but the condition on which indulgence was to be ex-

It may perhaps be thought, that when Galerius says he meant the Christians to return to the *instituta ueterum*, he simply meant, to paganism. That that was, in reality, his sole purpose, there cannot, of course, be any doubt. But it seems most probable, notwithstanding, that in this edict he intends the phrase to signify—at any rate to the Christians—the primitive forms of their own religion. He tells them that they were extremely pigheaded, and got themselves into all manner of trouble, because, in spite of the persecution, they would do neither of two things:—they would neither be good heathens, nor good Christians. If only they would have worshipped the God of the Christians, he implies that he would have been content. He does not observe that he has again half contradicted himself, by saying above that one reason why he attacked them was the tenacity with which they observed the laws that they had laid down for themselves.

tended, viz. on condition that the men should be *Christians* again;—not, that they might, *as before*, profess Christianity, but, that they should become Christians of the old true stamp again, *Christen nach Väterart*. He says that primitive Christianity was supposed by the Heathen to have allowed a recognition of the State gods side by side with Christ, referring to a fragment of Porphyry in St Aug. ciu. dei xix. 23, and says justly that it would be too droll a concession, to *permit* the Church as a favour to do this, which all the persecution could not *force* her to do. The clause *ut denuo*, then (he opines), must be a condition, not a concession. For *ut denuo sint Christiani* cannot simply mean 'that *they* may return to their Christianity,' because they are never represented as having *ceased* to be Christians; on the contrary, this edict treats them as still being such. This last argument is sound, so far as it goes; but the convincing refutation of the whole fabric lies in the fact which so learned a man as Dr Keim surely must have known, that, in this common phrase, *sint* is not a mere copula but the substantive verb. The taunt in Tertullian's time is *non licet esse uos*. The praise given to the Emperor Alexander is that *Christianos esse passus est*. The shout of the pagans in the Roman circus is *o Auguste, non sint Christiani*. Many other instances might be quoted. So the words are certainly a concession, a readmission of Christianity to the rank of a *religio licita*. The word *denuo* frankly confesses that it *had* been perfectly legal.

But there is also another slight indication that Galerius meant to include apostolic practice in the phrase. It is on the whole more likely that he would use his "peradventure," of the chance that the modern sectaries were descended from antient Catholic founders, than of the chance that the pagan institutions were due to the fathers of men now Christians. Again it must be repeated that there is nothing strange in Galerius speaking of Christian antiquity with respect,—respect, that is, for its antiquity, not for its Christianity[1].

It is, however, my belief that the dying Emperor is intentionally loose and vague. He used words which might, chamaeleon-like, look differently to different readers. The pagans might think that he was taunting all Christians, with having left their ancestral persuasion of polytheism. The dissenters might feel themselves bitterly rebuked for turning against the old faith for which their fathers bled, and clinging with such bigoted tenacity to their perverse and man-made regulations. And the Church, the pillar and ground of the truth, would feel more keenly still the smart of this buffet in the face, this insult added to eight years' injury, when she read that *she* had left the orthodox faith and the primitive discipline, that *she* paid no heed to the God of the Christians, that *she* (who had not a law of any kind that was not Divine)

[1] Dr Keim offers the suggestion that the *instituta ueterum* to which the Christians were invited to return were those of Judaism; but withdraws the suggestion on the ground that *forsitan* could not be used about anything connected with the Jews, because the Romans had been so long and so intimately familiar with all the ins and outs of Judaism! I'll warrant they knew a deal more at this time about Christianity than about that effete religion, of which they had never known much. But in truth the *forsitan* does not imply a doubt about the way in which the institutions originally came into existence, but only hints sourly that these masterful revolutionists were likely enough the actual children of the founders whom they were insulting.

acted on no other principle than human whim, that *she* had—not forced the Emperors by her fortitude to surrender at discretion, but—had obtained from them a contemptuous forgiveness because she was really too obstinate to be coaxed and too stupid to be frightened[1].

But the God of the Christians was not duped. "Le Dieu inconnu auquel il s'était enfin recommandé ne répondait pas à son insolente et tardive invocation[2]." He had been willing to allow His people to be eaten up like sheep; but yet He was determined to avenge them. "According to the Divine judgment," writes Eusebius, "need was that these things should happen; but nevertheless, Woe, saith the Scripture, to him by whom the offence cometh." Galerius died, and was buried. His mausoleum was shown in the Dacian province which had given him birth[3]. No provision for a successor was made. The tetrarchy was at an end. He had left his wife and children in the hands—hands but too credulously trusted—of his friend Licinius[4].

Licinius, then, (or Licinian, as it seems more correct to call him since his elevation) apparently assisted at the persecutor's death; and in all likelihood his advice had been taken before Galerius set pen to paper. Licinius had no policy but that of his benefactor, and would not demur to being one of the signataries. He had probably persecuted, when perse-

[1] Hunziker (p. 237) used to think Galerius' reason for ceasing to persecute was either nervousness about the future after his intended abdication, or desire to concentrate his attention upon Maxentius: I do not know what he thinks now that he has corrected his dates. Bernhardt in his small tract (p. 12) follows Keim and Baur.

[2] Prince de Broglie, vol. I. p. 207.

[3] Aur. Vict. epit. xl. 16. At the place called after his mother, Romulianum. The anonymous author says he died at Sardica.

[4] Lact. mort. 35.

cution was the order of the day: he was as ready to tolerate, or even to patronize, when the word was given for toleration. He had no religious feeling one way or the other. He cordially detested the pragmatical canting professors and scribblers who had got the agitation up: he said they were a common nuisance, plaguy fellows who were poisoning the country, and lost no opportunity of converting his forcible feeling against them into suitable action[1]. When Galerius was dead, he adhered steadfastly to the lines laid down in the edict: it was useful as a mark of his antagonism to Daza, whom perhaps he hated all the more because of his bookish propensities. It was not till many years after, when Daza had been a long while in the grave, and the rival and bugbear was Constantine, that Licinius identified himself with the conservative reaction, and discouraged, nay persecuted, the religion of progress[2].

[1] Aur. Vict epit. xli. 8: *infestus litteris, quas per inscitiam immodicam uirus ac pestem publicam nominabat;* id. Caess. xli. 5: *Licinio ne insontium quidem ac nobilium philosophorum seruili more cruciatus adhibiti modum fecere.* No one has ever accused the man of being religious.

[2] It is agreed on every side that Licinius spited the Christians because they favoured Constantine, not spited Constantine because he favoured the Christians. His persecution was not a religious persecution, even in the sense in which Diocletian's was so, much less in the sense in which that of Galerius and of Maximin was. An elaborate work upon the persecution of Licinius has been lately published, which I regret to say I know only by reviews, by Mr F. Görres, a liberally-minded Catholic. The primary object of the book is to examine critically the Licinian Martyrdoms. The author shows that the persecution was a much milder affair than was formerly supposed, and that in fact Licinius never issued any document which positively contravened the Edict of Milan. As one of his reviewers, Dr Hilgenfeld (*Zeitschr. f. wissensch. Theol.* 1876, p. 165) very candidly points out, Licinius' action reminds one more of the "May Laws" than of anything else. Not only did he refrain like Diocletian from bloodshed, but Christianity remained a *religio licita* throughout, like Ultramontanism in Prussia.—Up to the campaign of Cibalis in 314, the policy of Licinius had been to compete with Constantine for the

Constantine's name is added in the edict. He had probably not been consulted. He would certainly not have approved the wording of the paper: but he had already taken the same measure in the far West five years ago, and was not likely to object to seeing his name head a proclamation, the effect of which (in spite of ungracious language) would be to make him popular in those Eastern provinces, which his ambition already coveted.

There was one speaking omission in the preamble. It has often been discussed, why the name of Galerius' nephew is not added to the other three. It cannot be, as Tillemont thinks, a simple omission of Eusebius' copyists: the paragraph containing his titles would have been too long to slip out, and besides, Eusebius himself has something to say

chief place in the Church's esteem; but from that time he became insensibly colder towards her. The first news of any actual unkindness reached Constantine at his Decennalia, in 316. However, nothing very antagonistic was done, until the breach between the two dynasties had become irreparable in 321. His first act was to forbid Bishops to attend synods, or even to visit one another's houses: this was a direct rejoinder to Constantine's similar restriction placed on the haruspices. Next he chased all Christians out of his own household: but the fact that some pagan officials shared their fate, while Eusebius, the Arian Bishop of Nicomedia and a warm partisan of Licinius, was retained in favour, shows that he feared some murderous intrigue. It follows as a matter of course that the army was purged of all ardent Christians. Other regulations were designed to serve as little pieces of annoyance. No one was permitted on any pretext to visit the prisons. It was forbidden for both sexes to go to Church together (a feeble attempt to resuscitate a dead scandal), or for women to receive Christian instruction from their Bishops: women were only to be taught by women. Lastly, the odd tyrant said the Christian assemblies had better meet out of doors, where the air was fresher and better than in Church, and took the sanitary precaution of locking and destroying conventicles.—I have thought it good to say thus much about Licinius' later conduct to the Church: but it forms no part whatsoever of the Persecution of Diocletian, which might as fairly include Julian as Licinius. Diocletian's tombstone lies heavy enough on him, without adding the tombstones of Emperors whose very appointment he had withstood.

about the omission. Neither is it, as Keim suggests, because Galerius and Maximin were at feud. Galerius (however grudgingly) had recognised him as an Augustus: and in this very year the two were consuls together. Dean Milman's theory is visibly absurd, that "the Caesar of the East," as he is pleased to call him, found with surprise that his name had been insultingly omitted, and in revenge determined to go on with the persecution. There is more in Canon Robertson's opinion, who believes that Galerius did not venture to mention him, knowing Maximin's unquenchable animus against us. The fact seems to be, that Maximin (as Eusebius says plainly[1]) refused to sanction the proclamation as it stood, and was determined to garble it, and to water down some of its expressions, before his Orientals saw it. In other quarters of the globe it may be that the readers of the proclamation saw the names of four Augusti stand harmoniously side by side: but what few copies got abroad in the East bore no mark of Daza's concurrence.

Maximin refused to set his seal to Galerius' edict. He found it the easier to refuse, because his uncle's immediate death released him from the fear of having to give account of his independence. Hating the Church as he did, he would not pledge himself by formal enactment to allow her freedom and justice. Verbal instruction compromised him less for the future; and yet his was not the last case in which verbal reforms in the Church's favour have sufficed to flatter and cheat the Christian Powers.

He allowed his Grand Vizier, Sabinus, the Prefect of the East, to indite an encyclical to all his subordinates which was in appearance but a paraphrase of Galerius' own proclama-

[1] Eus. hist. eccl. IX. i. 2.

tion. This encyclical, which Eusebius has preserved, was not for the public eye: it corresponded to the letter of instruction to the judges which accompanied the edict of the three Emperors. On this account we are not surprised at the omission of a few passages, which the Christians had been intended to ponder, but which might be thought unedifying to the magistracy. But when these few omissions are studied, it will readily be perceived how well it suited Maximin's insidious designs to select that mode of giving general assent to the edict, which would make the omissions less conspicuous. In the first place, Maximin, not yet beneath Christ's lash, begs for no Christian intercessions. He scorns all but his own idolatrous sacrifices. The second alteration requires to be examined more closely, before its significance appears. At the first blush it might seem a courtesy to the Church to expunge from this encyclical the taunt of corruption and declension from the Catholic religion, and of negligence towards the Lord God. Upon this charge Sabinus and his master are silent. Christianity is dismissed with the description, "those who seem to follow an usage alien to Romans[1]." But the reason for this excision lies in Maximin's more theological hatred of the faith. He would not use phrases which seemed to indicate that primitive Christianity was perhaps a sufferable religion, to abandon which was a fall, or that Christians would have seemed any nobler in his eyes for regular attendance at the Christian Sacrifice and maintaining orthodoxly the Divinity of Christ. To call modern Christianity un-Christian, sounded bitterer, but meant less mischief, than to call it un-Roman. And there is a third variation in Maximin's circular not less expressive. Nothing could have been

[1] Id. ib. 4: *οἱ ἀλλοτρίᾳ Ῥωμαίων συνηθείᾳ ἀκολουθεῖν δοκοῦντες.*

plainer than the phrase in which Galerius reestablished Christianity as a legitimate persuasion: he had used the regular formula, *ut sint Christiani.* Maximin says nothing of the kind. "Their sacred Majesties," writes the prefect, "determining that it was not their purpose for such a cause to bring the men into *so great* danger, have ordered their devoted servant to signify to your wisdom, that if any of the Christians be found going after the worship of his own people, you shall exempt him from *the molestation to which he is subject, and from personal danger.* You will write to your subalterns and let them know that after the date of this letter they *need not* exert themselves further in the cause." In other words, Christianity strictly is still illicit, though in particular cases not to be punished as severely as heretofore; and the Emperor, though forced for the present not to *require* you to persecute, will expect you not to relax your exertions more than can be helped[1].

It is almost a wonder that the judges interpreted Maximin's document in a sense so favourable to the brotherhood as they really did. Though no effectual security was given against the recurrence of the late atrocities,

[1] The words are: *ἵν' εἴ τις τῶν Χριστιανῶν τοῦ ἰδίου ἔθνους τὴν θρησκείαν μετιὼν εὑρεθείη, τῆς κατ' αὐτοῦ ἐνοχλήσεως καὶ τοῦ κινδύνου αὐτὸν ἀποστήσειας*; and again, *ἵνα γνῷεν, περαιτέρω αὐτοὺς τούτου τοῦ γράμματος φροντίδα ποιεῖσθαι μὴ προσήκειν.* Keim perversely interprets the clause *ἵν' εἴ τις* as containing the condition on which the Christians were to be released from danger, corresponding to his version of *ut denuo sint*: 'you shall secure him from molestation if you find that he is orthodox and really attends Christian ordinances.' In the second clause quoted, Valesius (without necessity, as Heinichen rightly thinks) changed *γράμματος* into *πράγματος*, depending on *φροντίδα.* I take *περαιτέρω* in a temporal sense, because no directions are given in the letter, "beyond which" they need not go,—the sense given by Heinichen. Valesius and others render *μὴ προσήκειν* by *non licere;* but there is a Red Sea of difference between the two words.

the Persecution of Diocletian was virtually at an end, even in the East. The subordinate officers issued and posted local mandates, which conceded more than they were bidden to concede. In some cases their humanity showed itself so impatiently that, before they could have the notices published, they had set the prisoners free[1]. Perhaps never in the world's history were the privileges of Christian public worship so enthusiastically accepted. From jails and mines, from 'hills and holes where they hid themselves before,' the people streamed. Such congregations never had been seen. Churches began to rise. The confessors preached publicly the faith which their sufferings had endeared to them. The weak-hearted prostrated themselves before them, imploring their more than sacerdotal absolution. Christianity took the cities by storm. As the bands of exiles passed through on their homeward journey, the native Churches met them at the gates, and led them in bold procession, with psalms and hymns, right through the main streets and market squares, and set them on their way. Their demonstrations of sympathetic and unaffected joy, and the marks which the sufferers bore about in their bodies, appealed so powerfully for compassion, that even those who were not yet Christians joined in the festivities, as though the cause of rejoicing were their own.

But this joy, in the provinces of Maximin—and these (after a dangerous disputation with Licinius) now included all from Cyrene round to the Bosphorus—was not to be long unchequered. That prince had seen with a scowling eye the Church's exultation, and the popularity that she had won. It was time that he and his theosophists should

[1] Id. ib. 7 : ἔργοις δὲ πολὺ πρότερον.

apprise the ignorant folk that Christianity existed on the barest sufferance, and that she was not in favour at court. Hardly six months had elapsed since the death of Galerius, when the first warning came to the Church, not to presume. There was in every town one spot, to which, as soon as ever Christians might declare themselves without fear, every Churchman and Churchwoman was sure to run. It was the ground where slept the sainted dead. Masses said, sermons preached, prayers offered, vows made, over the martyrs' bones, had an efficacy double of any others. But the Government took this pious reverence for an insult to itself. Every adoration offered at a martyr's grave was an open, seditious condemnation of the Emperor's persecuting policy. From first to last Christianity was a homage to the enemies of Caesar. Maximin's toleration of the faith did not include the toleration of such sinister gatherings. On some pretext—perhaps of the immoral tendency of torchlight or moonlight meetings out of doors—the Emperor gave strict orders that there should thenceforth be no services of any kind within the cemetery gates[1].

Towards the fall of this year, Maximin made (it seems) a kind of progress through his loyal provinces. Most of the chief towns of the East, such as Tyre, Antioch, and Nicomedia, received the honour of a visit. Humble addresses were presented to him everywhere; for probably the unhappy provincials hoped that obsequiousness might secure them and their wives from his overlordly claims on purse and person. In one point these addresses resembled one another

[1] Eus. hist. eccl. IX. ii 1: *πρῶτον μὲν εἴργειν ἡμᾶς τῆς ἐν τοῖς κοιμητηρίοις συνόδου διὰ προφάσεως πειρᾶται.* The date of this Burials Bill is marked by the phrase *οὐδ' ὅλους ἐπὶ μῆνας ἕξ*, i.e. it falls in October, 311.

closely. Maximin was known to have one taste, as well developed as even his taste for strong drinks and for female society, namely the taste for Christian persecution. Theotecnus at Antioch, where he was now supreme, set the example of calling the imperial attention to the religious question. Other towns—for in every one there was a sufficient clique of zealous pagans to recommend the policy to the rest—took the happy hint. Until the Emperor came, the two parties had been the best of friends, but they found his presence act like a revelation. They told the Emperor that the neighbourhood of the Christians was intolerable. They deeply regretted Maximin's concession to them in the beginning of the year. They did not dare to ask him to revoke his decision formally. They only asked leave for so much local self-government as to enable them to expatriate their Christian fellow-citizens[1].

These petitions proved a prodigious success. They touched the Platonic sovereign to the heart. They were so perfect a satisfaction to him, as to make it the current belief of the Church, that Maximin had himself sent the deputations to himself[2]. No doubt in every town he came to, he dwelt with such pious fervour upon the memorials presented to him elsewhere, as to make like action a necessity. He could even afford to hesitate, to argue, almost to refuse. At his own Bithynian capital—we have his own word for the statement, not contradicted by that of the Christian professor of rhetoric at the place—when the

[1] Eus. hist. eccl. IX. ii. 2.

[2] Eus. l. c.: αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ καθ' ἡμῶν πρεσβεύεται; Lact. mort. 36: *in primis Christianis indulgentiam communi titulo datam tollit, subornatis legationibus ciuitatum, quae peterent ne intra ciuitates suas Christianis conuenticula extruere liceret, ut suasu coactus et impulsus facere uideretur, quod erat sponte facturus.* I reject Fritzsche's *quasi* for *suasu*.

memorialists came to him, with a magnificent display of the images of the gods, asking leave to banish the atheists, Daza answered, that he knew the Christian population there to be very large; that he thanked them cordially for the request, but observed that the petition was not quite unanimously signed; that the Christians (if there were any who were determined to stick to their superstition) were as free to abide Christians as those who abode worshippers of the gods; but nevertheless he deemed himself compelled to defer to the judgment of such a deputation, a deputation which felt so strongly in the matter, both because all imperial precedent was in favour of granting such petitions, and because the gods might take it amiss if the claims of expediency were preferred to those of religion [1].

Thus compelled by the people, whose most humble minister he was, the despot made no secret of the delight he felt at the turn public opinion was taking. At Tyre, the decree of the municipal authorities, forbidding Christianity within the town, was engraved on a brazen tablet and affixed to a column: and appended to it, was engraved a jubilant sermon from the pen of the sovereign, congratulating the city on its act. "At last," begins the happy preacher, "weakness has become strong and bold. The night of error is scattering. The mist is breaking up. You would not believe me," he continues a little lower down, "if I were to say what transport of joy, what delicious pleasure, what solid satisfaction this has been to me. You have given me the greatest proof of your religious temper." Tyre, he says, had left off thinking of her material interests, had forgotten all selfish demands of older days, as soon as

[1] Eus. hist. eccl. IX. ix. 17, 18, 19.

ever she perceived that 'the votaries of that damned folly were beginning to creep forward again,' like a fire which was supposed extinct. He saw the good hand of Jove in the fact that the Tyrians had fled immediately for healing to his own breast,—the home, the metropolis, of all piety[1]. He contrasts the present prosperity of the East with those earlier days of plague and pestilence, war and famine, storms and earthquake, which had visited the empty folly of those trespassers against all laws divine and human, who had swamped the earth with their shame. He enthusiastically gives the Tyrians leave to do what they desired. "If they still cling to their damnable folly, let them, as you demand, be sorted out, and chased over the hills and far away from your city and its district. Follow out your laudable zeal. Free yourselves from all pollution and profanation. Then your city will be able duly to serve the rites of the immortal gods, according to its own innate inclination." And then follows what the Tyrians had really wanted. "And that you may know, how extremely agreeable to us your petition has been, we permit you, our dutiful subjects, to demand of us, in requital of this your godly resolution, any great privilege that you shall choose. And indeed you must be sure so to do, and to receive what you demand; for you shall assuredly obtain it: and it will remain for ever to testify to your descendants of your devotion to the gods and of our substantial mode of rewarding it[2]."

[1] Eus. hist. eccl. IX. vii. 6: *ὥσπερ πρὸς μητρόπολιν πασῶν θεοσεβειῶν.*

[2] We may call this a 'Permissive Prohibitory Act.' The date is fixed not only by the expressions in Maximin's sermon which describe a fine early summer, but by the allusion in IX. x. 12. It is there said to have been 'not quite a year' from the laws of the brazen tables to Maximin's final toleration edict of 313.—It is likely enough that in many cases the towns were contented

Theotecnus had meanwhile been making vigorous efforts to popularize idolatry in that city which gave birth to the Christian name. There was a good deal of what is commonly called Jesuitry in the religious revival of the new Platonics: and this character was in no one more pronounced than in the Curator of Antioch. Eusebius sums up this aspect of the man and of the movement, when he calls Theotecnus a formidably clever, unscrupulous sorcerer, to whom no greater misnomer could have been applied than the name he bore, of 'Child of God[1].' This gentleman supposed it not inconsistent with the advance of truth, to establish, for the behoof of the ignorant, upon whom philosophic argument would have been wasted, a wonderful image of the reconciled tutelary of the town, Zeus Philius, the god of goodwill. The pomp of the Christian reconsecrations was quite eclipsed by the imposing rites at the dedication of the image. Theotecnus devised novel mysteries in its honour in which men were put through a profane and mumming parody of the holy Sacrament of the Laver. There were further initiations, to match the successive steps of Christian initiation, so grotesquely wicked that Eusebius dares not mention them. The highest stage of mystic knowledge to which a man could attain (and the Emperor Maximin appears to have been among the first who attained it), was the discovery, made only when Gnosis was advanced enough to despise the shock, of the springs and traps by which the image worked. These weird secrets were

with thus cheaply winning their master's favour, without ever using their new privileges against Christianity. The kind of recompence which they received may perhaps be gathered from Lact. mort. 36: *quo sibi ad praesens fauorem conciliaret, cum magna omnium laetitia sustulit censum.*

[1] Eus. hist. eccl. IX. ii. 2, δεινὸς καὶ γόης καὶ πονηρὸς ἀνὴρ, καὶ τῆς προσωνυμίας ἀλλότριος.

irregularly divulged, two years later, under the spell of torture, to the inquisitors of Licinius. But the natives were enthralled with wonder at the show. The god was liberal of miracles. Oracles of grave importance were uttered: and, above all, Jupiter backed the petition of the townsmen, and bad his minister declare that no Christians must be allowed to enter the district of Antioch. The new deity was so paying an invention, that Maximin rewarded his hierophant with promotion to the proconsulate[1].

And now, throughout all the East, while the towns were raising local persecutions against the faith, Maximin and his advisers were taking a most wise step for the reformation of paganism. No former persecutor had ever seen the need of supplying anything in the place of that which he destroyed. It was a measure more worthy of a politician and a philosopher, than the old trickeries of an idol temple. We have already drawn attention to the fact that paganism was destitute of every element of cohesion. It had never had to grapple, till now, with any foe; for it had never challenged scepticism by committing itself to a creed, nor had it even consciously proposed to itself the reduction of immorality. It had never, therefore, trimmed itself into a wieldy form. An ardent devotee here and there might perhaps make it his business to encourage others to the worship of the gods, or to blame them for their slackness: but, as a matter of constitution, paganism (besides having no historical unity with the past, no *life*) had no pastorate, no cure of souls, no *sacramenta*, no Bible, no doctrine of unity, no preaching of law or teaching of dogma, no yearning for fellowship. The mind is positively amazed when first it recognises the full difference between

[1] These statements are gleaned from Eus. hist. eccl. IX. iii., and xi. 5 and 6.

that poor chaos which the heathen religions were, and the Hebrew ideal of a *Church*, a peculiar people, which was to widen and widen till humanity should be reunited in the Perfect Man. Maximin, at the teaching of Theotecnus, conceived the stupendous thought of creating a Heathen Catholic Church.

The first great measure was the creation of Pagan Bishops with territorial authority. Such a thing had been unheard of before, and we can hardly tell whether the pagan ministers in the smaller towns were pleased or not at being put under superior jurisdiction. The number of local ministers was at the same time increased, not a single image being left without its separate chaplain; whereas before, many of the temples had been served, as occasion required, by any casual person who knew how to do the sacrificial act. And in imitation of the Christian daily Sacrifice, the pagan Prelate of each chief city, with the help of his subordinates, was to see that in each single temple of the town, perhaps of the country too, sacred rites should be offered day by day, with all the regularity of a Liturgy. Within Maximin's own palace there was an uninterrmitted daily service. But even thus the hierarchy was not complete enough to match our Church. Maximin added the provincial to the diocesan organization, reserving for the crown the right to appoint all superior officers. And these Archbishops and Bishops were armed with most formidable powers over the laity. Through the organised espionage of their parochial clergy, they were enabled to make a perfect monopoly of religion. They stopped the building of Christian churches, which had been permitted by name in the edict of Galerius. They detected the smallest gatherings of the Christians, even in private houses. If it were observed that any man was

inconstant at the worship of the gods, whether he called himself Christian or heathen, the new pontiffs had authority to summon him before their own consistories, or to deliver him to the secular arm, according as they saw fit. The ecclesiastical courts were unable to inflict the penalty of death, but were allowed to mulct malcontents of noses, eyes, and ears.

To the terrors of the law were added the seductions of aestheticism and outward grandeur. The men selected for the antichristian bishoprics, were men who had adorned the highest civic magistracies: for rank was supposed to confer lustre on the Church, not the Church to ennoble rank. As it was the fashion for devout Christians to seek a sacerdotal blessing on their meals, so Maximin paid honour to his hierarchy, by refusing to eat flesh not slaughtered at an altar: and all his food and drink had been sanctified by the rites of libation. Guards of honour were told off to escort the dignitaries. The two upper orders, the metropolitan and suffragan prelates (for in Maximin's establishment the former were not simply *primi inter pares*), were ordered to display their august and mystic dignity by wearing, as their ordinary dress, albs of snowy purity[1].

We do not know whether any formal efforts were made to preach the Neoplatonic creed, or whether the people were left to learn, what was embodied in the new ecclesiasticism, to chance, and to gratuitous teaching such as Maximin gave in his brazen rescripts. But it is unhappily certain that in the opposite direction, in the polemic against Christianity, they adopted means as discreditable to them, as the pagan hier-

[1] For these three paragraphs, read Lact. mort. 36, 37; Eus. VIII. xiv. 9 and IX. iv. 2. We can hardly suppose that Maximin (like Julian) made any attempt to purify the morals of his new ministry.

archy was creditable. Obsolete and ridiculous slanders were gravely revived. One of these unhandsome tricks is traced to the commandant of the Roman garrison at Damascus. That gallant officer, one night, sent out into the market-place, and fetched off the pavement three or four notorious strumpets, and requested them, unless they loved torture, to dictate officially a fantastic story, of how they had once been Christian women and had learned their execrable trade in the celebration of the Mass. Christian worship was then as well known as it is now; yet when the Emperor received the acts from the commandant, he gave instant orders that copies of the document should be circulated and published openly in every city in his empire[1].

But to Theotecnus must be paid the crowning, damning honour of the masterstroke of this part of the persecution. For a long time past the Christians themselves had not remained content with those scanty records of the Life and Death of their Master which Divine inspiration had reckoned sufficient. As far back as the times of Tertullian, and even of St Justin, apologists had challenged their enemies to inspect works which passed under the name of Pilate[2]. But Theotecnus had turned the tables on them. During the days which he had passed in the Curatorship of Ancyra, he had amused his leisure time with the composition of a rival forgery. It was not the most careful or critical of forgeries indeed; for even Eusebius, of whose uncritical character so much is said, was able to show that Theotecnus had dated our Saviour's Passion five years before Pilate ever came into the province[3]. But the piece suited its purpose well enough.

[1] Eus. hist. eccl. IX. v. 2.

[2] S. Iust. mart. apol. I. 35, 48: Tert. apol. 5, 21.

[3] Eust. hist. eccl. I. ix. 2, 3.

It was perhaps not intended at first for any serious use, but rather as a mocking burlesque. What these Acts contained, we happily do not know; in all likelihood (for anything can be proved in a forgery) they proved our Lord guilty of moral as well as of political crimes[1].

The ingenious author appears to have given publicity to his work pretty early in the persecution; for it will be remembered that the explosive judge who sentenced St Andronicus argued against him out of them,—unless it were from others like them[2]. Theotecnus himself (whether he had then set his thoughts on paper or not) argued in the same way against St Theodotus in 304. Now, however, Theotecnus was a greater and more influential man; and he determined to make a wider and an authoritative use of his composition. He showed them to his delighted master. Maximin at once ordered copies to be sent to every place, great or small, town or country, in the whole East. A full edict[3] was sent along with them, which ordered that the Acts of Jesus and Pilate should be posted up in conspicuous places where every one might read them. It was nothing to the Emperor and his minister that they were conscious of the fraud. They had but one object—to damage Christianity. But the worst is yet to be told. With a most diabolical fertility of resource, the imperial edict enjoined, that all schoolmasters, from the Dardanelles to the Nile, should be supplied with copies, that all

[1] Their grossly blasphemous character may be inferred not only from Eus. hist. eccl. IX. v. 1: πάσης ἔμπλεα κατὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ βλασφημίας; but from the more explicit passage in St Lucian's Apology (ap. Routh, *Rel. Sac.* IV. p. 6): *tion ut ista, quae nunc falso conscribuntur, continent Acta Pilati, sed innocens immaculatus et purus ad hoc solum mortem suscepit, ut eam uinceret resurgendo.* Theotecnus was once a Christian.

[2] See above, p. 201.

[3] It was a πρόγραμμα, not an ἀντιγραφή.

scholars should be made to understand that these Acts were the genuine account: nay the edict condescended to minuter and meaner details still. The Acts were made a government text-book. Lest from any of those pure boys' minds the filthy lies should pass without tainting, it was expressly ordered that every boy should have the Acts dinned into his ears until he knew them by heart; that every boy should be examined in them and exercised in repeating them; and that every boy should have to compose out of his own reflexion frequent declamations upon them. The Christians could not pass down the street without hearing the Name at which they bow, coming from those young lips in scurrilous banter, or in the lofty moral scorn of rhetorical practice. Thus at the very age when the heart is tenderest, when the pathos of the Cross and the Crown of Thorns tells most upon the life, all reverence and pity for Jesus Christ were to be purposely, laboriously, as a piece of school discipline, turned into contempt and ridicule and hatred. Any one who knows how profane and blasphemous imaginations are apt to be shot into the mind, untimely and unwelcome, when once they have been suggested, will see how purely Satanic the device of Maximin was.

The state of affairs which was now reached, in 311 and 312, was as follows. Christianity had never yet received, in the East, the formal removal of its disabilities which Galerius had intended. Though Maximin still affected to give complete religious liberty to his empire at large, he had encouraged the several towns to proscribe Christianity. The ecclesiastical courts of the novel hierarchy possessed powers of enforcing conformity upon the individual. And as we have already hinted, in those places which had declared themselves

pagan, it was gradually discovered that the civil power might go further lengths even than such spiritual censures as torture and mutilation. So it came to pass that some of the very purest martyrdoms occurred after the great edict of toleration. At Emesa, an aged Bishop and two others were actually tossed to the beasts on their confession of the Christian name. But this final effort of persecution was chiefly directed against the best *theologians* of the Church. It was designed to shut formidable mouths. One of the greatest Prelates of the time, St Peter of Alexandria, who had been released from his long confessoriate in 311, and had drawn up canons for the readmission of the lapsed as though the persecution were over, with an innocent surprise found himself a martyr after all. And these things were not kept privy from the Emperor. He had taken up his abode at Nicomedia. That town became the headquarters of persecution. At any rate since the death of Pamphilus, the most famous Biblical scholar of the East was Lucian, a Priest of Antioch. Maximin sent for the man to Nicomedia. He was invited to make a defence of his religion, part of which Rufinus has recorded for us, and very noble it is: and when he had finished the peroration, he was beheaded. A few days before he died, in his farewell epistle to his own Church, he wrote an interesting sentence. "A perfect choir of martyrs," he says, "salute you all at once. And I tell you the glad-tidings, that Anthimus the Pope"—the great Archbishop of Nicomedia, whom even Galerius had spared—"has just received his final consecration by the course of martyrdom[1]."

[1] For the above, see Eus. IX. vi., as well as VIII. xiii. 2, and compare all that Routh brings together (l. c.) about St Lucian and St Peter; also Hunziker, p. 281, where he shows conclusively Eusebius' mistake about the date of St Anthimus' death.

But the fanaticism of Maximin was bringing him into trouble on two sides. He had created an 'Eastern Question.' It happened that part of his dominion was bounded by the not insignificant kingdom of Armenia, which had hitherto done the Roman good service in his struggle with the power of Persia. Now, as we have mentioned before, Armenia,—King, Queen, people and all—had become Christian. The first state that had learned to appreciate the blessed influence of Christianity upon government, might well feel wroth at the treatment of the brotherhood across the border. But St Gregory's converts had a fleshly as well as a spiritual kinship with some of the oppressed. Lesser Armenia, separated from them by a mere geographical line, and entirely peopled by men of their own clan, was a Christian province, but subject to the powers at Nicomedia. Maximin's ministers—perhaps his ecclesiastics—made the unhappy attempt to enforce among the hills of Koordistan the same discipline which was in vogue under the Bithynian Olympus. But the attempt to make these Armenians sacrifice to the demons of Neoplatonism, called forth an ungovernable sympathy from their independent cousins. Eusebius does not make it clear which party was the first formally to declare war. War however broke forth: and Maximin, hampered at home by pestilence and famine (which he boasted had been banished for good by his pagan zeal), suffered a disastrous defeat. The first war fought under the banner of the Cross against oppression, ended in the success of righteousness[1].

And Maximin found himself embroiled with a far more potent adversary on the other side. Even in 311, Constantine had written to him, advising him not to behave with so little

[1] Eus. hist. eccl. IX. viii. 2, 4.

regard for the edict of toleration[1]. And now, late in 312, Constantine's reasons for being displeased with the senior Emperor were better than ever. Upon his triumphant entry into Rome after Maxentius' death at Pons Milvius, he discovered that that prince and Maximin had come to a stealthy agreement. A correspondence betwixt the two was found; and the statues of Daza and Maxentius were observed standing on the same pedestal. This, apart from the religious question, was enough. But at that moment, if at any in the life of Constantine the Great, the religious question was uppermost. Upon the nature of Constantine's famous Vision, I do not enter, nor upon the nature of his conversion to the faith. Suffice it here to say that at Pons Milvius Constantine had made a sharp, if superstitious, experiment upon the efficacy of the saving Sign, and was beyond measure impressed by his success. He had long been biassed for Christianity by his sagacious perception that it was the power of the future: but his was a mind incapable of atheism, and he was now deeply convinced that Christianity was—I will not say, a true system, but—a worship of a substantial Deity. He went down to meet Licinius at Milan (Licinius was there to marry his colleague's young sister) in all the fervour of a neophyte. The one grand event of the meeting of the Emperors was the great effectual close of the ten years' strife,—the Edict of Milan.

The famous Edict of Milan has a claim to be remembered far above that of ending the Persecution of Diocletian. In that respect, indeed, it is of less real importance than Galerius' legacy of peace. This edict is more an era in the religious history of the world. It is the very first announce-

[1] Lact. mort. 37.

ment of that doctrine which is now regarded as the mark and the principle of civilization, the foundation of solid liberty, the characteristic of modern politics. In vigorous and trenchant sentences it sets forth perfect freedom of conscience, the unfettered choice of religion. Alexander, Gallienus, Galerius, had broadened the aegis of Rome so as to protect one more creed. Christianity had passed from the number (it might be infinite) of *religiones illicitae* into the number of *religiones licitae:* but that was all. By the Edict of Milan, all religions of all sorts, sizes, and origins, effected at a bound the same exodus. Galerius, snarling and growling,—the very figure that the Dreamer saw "biting his nails because he could not come at them,"—had been compelled conditionally to arm with legal authority a certain faith. Constantine the Great said boldly, "Henceforth the State rejects the function of prescribing in matters of faith: religion is inalienably a question for the individual."

"We have long seen," says the edict, "that we have no business to refuse freedom of religion; and that to the judgment and desire of each individual man must be left the power of seeing to matters of belief, according to the man's own free will." There is no ambiguity here. "In this view, we had given orders, which were destined for the Christians too, that every man should loyally observe his own persuasion and his own cult." The Toleration Act of 311, that is to say, was intended to give as full a liberty to a Christian as to a heathen[1]. The State would not dictate to what religion a

[1] Readers who have studied the subject may be startled at the hardihood of this sentence. It has hitherto been universally supposed that there were (not counting Maximin's) *three* successive edicts of toleration, viz. (i) that published by Galerius, Constantine, and Licinius, in 311; (ii) one supposed to have been published by Constantine and Licinius, in 312, to which reference

man should belong, but exhorted him to cleave steadfastly to whichever fate and his forefathers' choice had assigned

is made in the next following; (iii) the Edict of Milan, published by Constantine and Licinius, in 313. Now I entirely reject the supposed Second Edict—which has been invented solely to explain the references in the Edict of Milan, and is *nowhere* else alluded to—and am satisfied that these references are to the First Edict, the edict of Galerius, given on p. 300.

The chief facts are as follows. Eusebius (hist. eccl. IX. ix. 12) mentions a *νόμος ὑπὲρ Χριστιανῶν τελεώτατος*, made by the two pious Emperors after the fall of Maxentius, one result of which was Maximin's second rescript to Sabinus, which he has transcribed at length in the same chapter: of this *νομος τελεώτατος*, however, Eusebius gives no farther description—at least, not then and there. Now Mosheim, Neander, and a host of other writers, have assumed that this *νόμος τελεώτατος* was the lost Second Edict referred to in the Third or Milanese Edict. Dr Keim (*Theol. Jahrb.*, l.c., p. 219) rightly shows their mistake on three grounds: (a) Eusebius evidently means the Milanese Edict itself by the *νόμος τελεώτατος*: (b) the document referred to in the Milanese Edict is there described as involving what was harsh and merciless, and therefore could hardly be called by Eusebius *τελεώτατος*: (c) no room can possibly be made for *another* Christian edict between the fall of Maxentius and the great Edict of Milan. Keim, then, avers that the *νόμος τελεώτατος* was the Milanese Edict, but, in a manner which (I must say) seems to me reckless, alleges that Eusebius (i) has consciously misdated the second rescript of Maximin, in making it follow the Milanese Edict and not the lost Second Edict, and (ii) has held his tongue about the Second Edict altogether, because it was discreditable to Constantine to have published anything so hard upon the Church. These are grave charges to bring against a historian and a Bishop, and it would have been well if Dr Keim, before making them, would have discussed a simple theory, which did occur to his mind, for he mentions it and flouts it without a word of argument: viz., that Eusebius tells the *whole* truth because there *was* no Second Edict, and nothing *but* the truth because it *was* the Milanese Edict which produced Maximin's second rescript, and that the harsh regulations denounced by Constantine were not his own handiwork but part of the Edict of 311.

There is but one small obstacle in the way:—Constantine speaks of *conditions* imposed *σαφῶς in detail*, in the former document of toleration. Now Galerius' Edict contains only a *general* condition, *ita ut ne quid contra disciplinam agant;* therefore, clearly, the reference is not to that public Edict itself. But, as I point out in the text, the Edict was accompanied by a *Rescript* to the judges, expounding the general condition in detail: *per aliam autem epistulam iudicibus significaturi sumus, quid debeant obseruare.* It is to this *Rescript* to which Constantine's new despatch (itself a Rescript, not an Edict, see Eus. hist. eccl. x. v. 6, 7, 14, etc.)

him. "But there were sundry and diverse conditions[1] attached in detail in that Rescript in which the said power was conceded to the aforesaid Christians." There are indeed no conditions detailed in the Edict which has been preserved, and of which we have given a translation: but that Edict sets forth the general condition of 'doing nothing contrary to discipline,' and mentions immediately the lost *Rescript* of instruction to the judges touching the nature of that discipline. Constantine the more naturally alludes in this place to the accompanying Rescript, and not to the public Edict, inasmuch as the document we are now considering (though commonly called the Edict of Milan) was really itself a Rescript, or farther paper of instructions upon the mode of administering the Edict of 311. "So because of these conditions, some of them (it may be) after a short while,"—not at first, because the conditions were not proclaimed in the Edict, so that they only came to know them by breaking them—"withdrew from the loyal observance of Christianity." Galerius then had imposed harsh conditions, but had not let the unhappy Christians know what his conditions were. The harshness and reticence combined make it still plainer that

refers: it is distinctly called *ἐκείνη ἡ ἀντιγραφή* (id. ib. § 3), and *τὰ πρότερα ἡμῶν γράμματα τὰ πρὸς τὴν σὴν καθοσίωσιν ἀποσταλέντα* (§ 6), and in the original Latin (ap. Lact. mort. 48) *prius scripta ad officium tuum data.* Constantine was a co-signatary of the Edict of 311, and therefore the word *κεκελεύκειμεν* could as justly be used of that, as of a document signed by only Licinius and himself. I believe then that I am fully justified in exploding the theory of the Three Edicts.

[1] The notion of the word *αἱρέσεις*, *condiciones*, in this place meaning *sects* seems to me so preposterous that I do not discuss it. It would express the exact contrary of the tenour of the edict to say, "Our last edict tolerated a number of schisms by name; now, in the cause of religious freedom, we order all these sects to be erased." Nevertheless the theory has had influential supporters. I can make neither head nor tail of Dr Heinichen's Meletema XXII., in the third volume of his Eusebius.

Galerius had only meant to conciliate the Christians for the nonce, in hopes to cheat Christ into removing His heavy hand.

Constantine, in the Edict of Milan, does not say in so many words that the conditions themselves were hard[1]—that they would strike a mere reader as hard—but acknowledges freely that there were hardships accompanying them. It is not easy to conjecture, at least with any confidence, what Galerius had bidden his magistrates exact as the price of licensing Christianity. The only clue, and that not a sure one, is to be found in what seem to be fresh concessions in the Edict of Milan. In the first place, Constantine expresses the wish not to appear to damage either any form of worship, or any rank of life. We conclude that in 311, Christianity was forbidden to all but certain classes,—that if a man chose to declare himself a Christian he would incur no danger, but might no longer take his seat as a Decurion in his native town, or the like. Again, it is now ordered that the Christians are to receive back their Churches and sites and demesnes, simply for the asking; the Emperor's own noble liberality indemnifying those who had bought or received such property. As the former order of proceedings is described as 'definite and very different,' it seems clear that Galerius had endeavoured to turn some money on the transaction. Again, men are now encouraged freely to *choose* their own religion, and this provision is rightly supposed to point at a former veto upon proselytism: it has been thought that possibly a certain number of years of Church membership previous to the perse-

[1] Heinichen (l. c.) points out this inaccuracy of Keim's on p. 747. Eusebius does not write αἴτινες (αἱρέσεις) σκαιαὶ ἦσαν, but καὶ (something additional) ἄτινα σκαιὰ ἦν.

cution were considered a necessary qualification, before any one, under the first statute of tolerance, might revert. Other writers have remarked that Constantine gives perfect liberty not only *to practise*, but also *in practising* any given religion,—*facultatem in colendo*, not only *colendi*. Had Galerius granted leave to worship Christ, but subject to some horrid pagan supervision? insisted upon all the sects being taken, unwelcome and unwilling, into Catholic communion? framed some Public Worship Regulation Act, that forbad services and uses which the Christian conscience felt it needed? This is an extremely probable guess. But to the best of my belief, among the provisos of the former rescript must have been conspicuous one which, while speciously allowing perhaps an unmaimed Christianity where Christianity was allowed at all, removed the question entirely from the judgment and conscience of the individual soul. I cannot help thinking that one of those things which Constantine describes as "sinister, and not german to our gracious benevolence," must have been a stipulation which made room for Maximin's permissive prohibitory laws,—a stipulation that if the Church was anywhere obnoxious to the majority, she was to be tabooed,—a stipulation (that is) that religion should still be, what it had always been till then, a matter of public external order, not of private spiritual conviction. This supposition alone explains the startling distinctness,—as clear as a clap of thunder,—with which Constantine preaches, in the light of his new Christianity, absolute freedom of faith, as an indefeasible right, for Pagan or Manichee, for Catholic or schismatic. Every *condition* of toleration is clean cancelled: no circumstances are henceforth imaginable which would justify religious despotism. We have no more a charter for a Church or a sect, but a

charter for each unit of humanity. "No man whatsoever ought to be refused any facility for giving up his whole soul either to the observation of Christianity *or to any religion which he, personally, feels to be best adapted to his needs*[1]." It is for heralding this vast revolution in the bases of religion, if for anything,—not merely for his patronage of ourselves,—that Constantine the Great deserved his most majestic title of Peer of the Apostles.

And what special facts, at that particular moment, evoked this mighty utterance? Not the fall of Maxentius. The Christians in the new-won Italy needed no liberation, more than their heathen fellows. Maxentius' tyranny had pressed impartially upon all. Conceivably his new secret alliance may have involved something which looked ominously for the Church; but it was not for the West that the Western Emperors' decree was issued. It was undoubtedly Maximin's conduct, Maximin's false and treacherous construction of the Articles of 311, at which Constantine was aiming. This is revealed by the extraordinary speed with which Constantine and Licinius despatched their orders to the prince whom the Senate had just made their junior[2]. The battle of Pons Milvius had only been fought in the very end of October, and Constantine had subsequently passed some time in Rome;

[1] ap. Lact. mort. 48: *ut nulli omnino facultatem abnegandam putaremus, qui uel obseruationi Christianorum, uel ei religioni mentem suam dederet, quam ipse sibi aptissimam esse sentiret.*

[2] Lact. mort. 44: *senatus Constantino uirtutis gratia primi nominis titulum decreuit, quem sibi Maximinus uindicabat.* I see no need to disbelieve the story. Maximin was the first *Caesar* by seniority, and therefore, when he and Constantine were admitted Augusti together (see p. 273), would naturally retain his precedency. The curious thing is that though Constantine and Maximin had once been *filii Augustorum* while Licinius was an Augustus, yet, directly the tetrarchy was broken up, they both took their places above him.

and yet before the year 312 had quite run out, Maximin had not only received the haughty mandate from Milan, but had put forth his own semi-submissive rejoinder[1].

Maximin, in spite of his secret treaty with the Roman usurper, had pretended to be on good terms with the other Emperors[2]. But now his treachery was discovered, and the two Emperors were forming a perilously close alliance at Milan, probably against *him*. He resolved in fear to take the initiative. It was not for dread of Constantine's vengeance that he sent out his new mandate to Sabinus: for he was bent on war in any case. But he felt that at this crisis it would be better to reconcile the great party of his own subjects whom he had disobliged. He must take the complaints for the moment out of the Christians' mouths: it would be easy enough to deal sternly with them again when the crisis was past. His new missive went to work most strangely. He told Sabinus he firmly trusted that the wisdom of 'our lords, our fathers, Diocletian and Maximian,' in ordering the

[1] It will be seen that I do not accept quite the usual date of the Edict of Milan. Probably when most persons have placed that Edict in 313, they have thought only of Licinius' promulgation of it, June 13, 313, at Nicomedia. But it was only due to Maximin's opposition, that the edict was thus retarded in the East: the edict itself is earlier. The facts are these. That the edict in Eus. IX. ix. 12 is identical with the Edict of Milan I have already shown: and Maximin's second rescript to Sabinus was written in consequence of that edict. But in the rescript to Sabinus Maximin speaks of his visit to Nicomedia having taken place τῷ παρελθόντι ἐνιαυτῷ: therefore, as the visit to Nicomedia took place in 311, the rescript was written before the end of 312. And again the rescript to Sabinus must have been sent before Maximin left Syria on his march against Licinius: but as he started *hieme quam cum maxime saeuiente*, and (though he loitered on the march) was far up in Roumelia by April, he had probably left Syria by January. Indeed his last edict, in 313, speaks of the rescript as belonging to the year before. The point is of importance, for it shows how very impatient Constantine was for religious liberty.

[2] Eus. hist. eccl. IX. ix. 12: φιλίαν τε πρὸς αὐτοὺς ὑποκοριζομένῳ.

Christians to be reduced by sharp chastisements, was obvious to everybody. On coming into the East, however, he had found that in some places an actual majority of the most useful citizens had been banished for their religion. He had at once ordered the judges not to torture or browbeat them any more, but to wheedle and conjure them over to orthodox heathendom. No Turk ever lied more shamelessly; but let that pass. This leniency, according to the lordly liar, was converting Christians in shoals, when the antichristian deputations began to come: and then, what could he do but answer them genteelly? Maximin does not acknowledge that his civil answers to the towns had made any change in the position of the Christians, but continues with the very tone of an injured man. Although he *had* already given injunctions quite full enough, and there was no need to say a syllable more, yet he thought he might as well write word, that neither *beneficiarii* (a kind of Redifs), nor any one else, was to have leave and privilege—a horrible disclosure of what had hitherto been thought fair—to afflict the Christians with the process known by the cant term of "concussion." The judges (dreadful threat!) were to return to their wheedling and their conjuring. If any one, under their charming caresses, left the Church and worshipped the gods, so much the better for him; but if he refused, Maximin, like those who suggest pumps and horseponds deprecatingly, repeated that he could not think of allowing "concussions."

In this curious letter Maximin contradicts himself often enough to make his Christian subjects dizzy. First he justifies bloody persecution, then plumes himself upon having stopped it, next apologises for having set it again on foot, then denies that it was going on, and lastly orders it to cease. We cannot

wonder at what Eusebius relates, that the people whose wrongs the letter applauded and forbad, neither built Church nor held meeting in public on the strength of it; they did not know where to have it[1].

Relying on the bruised reed of this charter (which did but perpetuate the miserable *status quo*) Maximin went northward and westward, to occupy the provinces of Licinius before that old prince's wedding-feast was over. When he reached Bithynia, his army was so shattered with the winter's march, that he was obliged to wait for some time to recruit. As soon as it was prudent, he crossed the Bosphorus. Byzantium, not then the city of the great monarch whose eye first saw its surpassing value, took him but eleven days to reduce. He marched on to Heraclea, where he was detained a considerable time. When he reached Adrianople, he found Licinius there in person. Licinius was not desirous of giving battle: his forces were far too inferior: but he hoped to check Daza's onward march. Something[2], however, led to an engagement. It was fought on the 30th of April. Whether or not the tale be true, that the whole army of Licinius fell on their knees, and prayed the Most High God to befriend the right, it is certain that He did befriend it. The battle-field was as little the scene for a Maximin, as the Platonist's lecture-room for a Licinius. "The incredible speed which Maximin exerted in his flight, is much more celebrated than his prowess in the battle. Twenty-four hours afterwards he was seen pale, trembling, and without his imperial ornaments, at Nicomedia, one hundred and

[1] Eus. hist. eccl. IX. ix. 24.

[2] Lactantius mort. 46 makes the story a pendant to that of Constantine before the Milvian Bridge: he vouchsafes to the old bad barbarian a Vision and an Angel.

sixty miles from the place of his defeat." But Maximin did not stay in the Asiatic capital; for Licinius was following him up. Taking his wife and children, he made haste to escape into Cappadocia, leaving Diocletian's palace for his vanquisher. Licinius was not slow to enter on the possession: and on the 13th of June, 313, Lactantius and the remnant of the Church of Nicomedia read the manifesto of Milan.

Asia was now in the hands of Licinius, and Maximin was in the worst straits. His vast army was either cut to pieces, or incorporated in the legions of the victor. In self-defence he endeavoured to get together another, powerful enough to thwart the ambitious progress of Licinius. But he was now in the thick of the Christians. The Christians had heard that his rival was promising, and securing too, in every province where he came, a perfect liberty of conscience. It was nothing but his religious policy which was making Licinius such a favourite. Maximin had at any rate a few qualities which would make him a more popular ruler than his foe; for while Licinius was the most illiberal extortioner alive, Maximin had never oppressed with taxations on the Galerian scale, and at the same time was open-handed. There was only one thing to be done: but it was the most distasteful sacrifice that Maximin ever made. While he secured himself at Tarsus (to which he had retreated, to keep the keys of Syria), by blockhouses in the passes of the Taurus, he endeavoured to secure himself from his own subjects' wrath by at last giving in his adhesion to the religious policy of the West.

Maximin made the concession with so much dignity and grace, that it is impossible to help wishing that his

language were truer. His single-eyed desire to benefit all his subjects, he says, and his plan of conceding to the wishes of the majority, had been perspicuous. This could be proved by a mere cursory glance at the history of the last few years. He takes no blame to himself for the sufferings of the Christians. He had set his face against persecution from the first. Unjust judges had made religion a pretext for seizing property, but not with his connivance. Only the year before, he had written to the magistrates, ordering perfect liberty to be allowed in matters of religion. The judges had misread his instructions, and had caused Maximin's people to doubt the meaning of his ordinances; the Christians had felt shy (this was a fact) of performing the observances which they preferred. Maximin was determined that this wrong state of things should continue no longer. This time, he had resolved not to send Rescripts which the magistrates could keep dark, but to proclaim his intentions in a public Edict, so that any man with eyes might see that he was allowed to become a Christian if he chose, and to practise Christianity *as* he chose: there was to be no suspicion of a *double entendre*. If they wanted to build Lord's Houses—Maximin went so far as to call them by this name—they had free leave to do so. And as a further sign of the imperial benevolence, any houses or sites that had legally, under Diocletian's statute, fallen to the fiscus, were to return at once to the Catholic Church[1].

There is no saying how profoundly history might have been altered, had Maximin lived to enjoy the fruits of his honourable action. But when he wrote this edict, his hours

[1] Eus. hist. eccl. IX. x. 7.

were already numbered. Round the Deaths of the Persecutors dreadful tales have clustered: and it is probable that Maximin died of nothing worse than a natural death[1]. But the death which was natural to him, was the most dreadful perhaps that men can die. Maximin was known as a habitual drunkard; and in his dying delirium he is said to have cried out, that he saw God, with assessors all in white robes, judging him. He perished protesting to his Judge, even as he had protested in his last edict, that it was not he, but his officers, that had done it[2].

He was the last of the persecutors to die. That venerable man who had refounded the fortunes of the empire, who had been the maker of so many princes, and survived so many reigns, had gone to his rest in sorrow near the beginning of the year. Besides such pleasures as he could extract from his garden and his books, his servants, masons, and few private friends, he had felt but little joy since his retirement. He had been forced to order to a frightful death the servants whom he admired and loved with almost a childlike simplicity, because they professed a religion in which he saw no harm. He had been once summoned from his repose, and consulted on the best means of escaping from a difficulty, which, if his advice had been followed, would never have occurred: and when he had given his still wise counsel, not only was it ostentatiously rejected, but the shameless persons whom he had raised to distinction affronted him with the offer of a crown. And as his hairs grew greyer, and his years entitled him to still deeper venera-

[1] So say Zosimus and the Epitomator: Lactantius says he took poison, Eusebius seems to think of a spontaneous combustion.

[2] His death was in the summer of 313: I should place the edict in June.

tion, his sorrows had increased, and the insults he was compelled to brook were multiplied.

He had but one child, the Empress Valeria, a lady of a sweet and chastened nature, whom he had married to Galerius. The generous, meek, affectionate character of Valeria is revealed by one remarkable act of hers. Being herself debarred by nature from bearing children, and hated in consequence by her rude husband, she had not thought it beneath her to adopt and cherish as her own, Candidian, the son of one of Galerius' paramours. Scarcely had Valeria been left a widow, when she came (with Prisca her mother) to the court of her husband's nephew, who was himself married, and who had stood to her in the estimation of a son. But Maximin, perhaps full of the oriental notions of sovereign succession, instead of offering her a splendid asylum, had offered her an alliance at once adulterous and incestuous. Upon the receipt of her majestic and Christian reply, Maximin's cruel anger burst forth. He seized her goods. He took away her ladies of honour. He tortured and killed her chamberlains. He forced them to accuse her friends falsely of the most nefarious crimes, and punished with severe penalties the deeds never done. Lastly, he drove the two Empresses themselves into destitute exile, refused to assign them even a Seriphos or Pandataria where they might be in peace, and whensoever he heard where they had settled, sent messengers to oust them offensively from their place. From some spot in the wilds of Syria, Diocletian's daughter found means to send to her father the story of her unutterable woe. Diocletian, in astonishment and anger, sent an ambassage to Maximin to demand that Valeria should be instantly conveyed to Spalatro.

He received no answer. He sent several times, for the matter was one in which a father's heart and an Emperor's honour could not be contented with delay. But no Valeria came. At length he commissioned a prince of his own blood, a soldier of the highest rank and great influence, to approach Maximin, and to condescend to beseech him, by the memory of Diocletian's favours, to have mercy upon the father and the daughter. The envoy returned with the intelligence that Maximin had flatly refused [1].

It might have been thought that Maximin's hostility in itself would have been enough to secure the friendship of Licinius, even if recollections of boyish love could not touch the heart of Constantine. But it was not so. One of the conquering Emperor's first acts on entering Rome and Italy, was to destroy the images of his father-in-law and would-be assassin. Side by side with the images of Maximian stood the images of Diocletian: they formed but a Janus, two men in one. But reverence for Jovius proved no safeguard for the memorials of Herculius. Diocletian was told by some officious news-carrier that all his effigies together with his colleague's had been dragged by the hangman's hook and broken [2].

[1] Lact. mort. 39, 41. After Diocletian's and Maximin's death, the vengeance for the sins of both was wreaked on these unhappy ladies. Valeria, having witnessed in disguise (for she was herself proscribed by Licinius) the execution of her poor adopted boy, fled away for her life. Her husband on his deathbed had recommended the boy and her to Licinius, and she had paid her entire fortune into his avaricious hands as the price of her safety; yet she was Diocletian's daughter, and Maximin had wished to marry her, and these were inexpiable crimes. For fifteen months more after Candidian's death, she roamed the provinces in a marketwoman's garb, till at last, with the Empress Prisca, she was recognised at Saloniki. Amid the compassionate tears of thousands, the mother and daughter were beheaded, and their corpses tossed into the sea: *ita illis pudicitia et condicio exitio fuit.* See Lact. mort. 50, 51.

[2] Lact. mort. 42. Mr King has a

From this unduteous work at Rome, Constantine went down to Milan to consign Constantia to her aged and unattractive lover. Though conscious of what he had been doing, he was not abashed to send, in conjunction with Licinius, an invitation to the hermit of Spalatro to attend the festive ceremony. The old man of seventy-eight returned a dignified and valid excuse: he was too old and too infirm to bear the fatigues of the journey, or to take part in the joys of the marriage. But Licinius and his brother-in-law pretended to see in the excuse a mere pretext for political disapproval. With infamous bad taste, they sent back to Diocletian an angry and threatening letter, in which they told him that they knew he had always been a partisan of Maxentius, and was still a partisan of his daughter's persecutor, Daza[1].

Broken with sorrow and shame, insult, sickness and old age—and (as some say) seized once more with that mental malady which cares had before brought upon him,—Diocletian gave up even the desire for life itself. It did not require much violence to drive the spirit from the worn body. Diocletian refused to touch the food which was served to him, and died[2]. But before he died, the great step had

portrait gem representing Diocletian and Maximian as Janus.

[1] Aur. Vict. epit. xxxix. 8.

[2] This is Lactantius' account, and most affecting and vivid his narration is. Eusebius (hist. eccl. VIII. append. § 3) knows nothing of suicide, and only says *μακρᾷ καὶ ἐπιλυποτάτῃ τῇ τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενείᾳ διεργασθείς*. The younger Victor (l. c.) places his death in the nearest relation to Constantine's threatening letter: *morte consumptus est, ut satis patuit, per formidinem uoluntaria*, but he makes the mode poison: Eutropius has the same story word for word. Zosimus only mentions the death, but says nothing about the manner; while Zonaras xii. 33 records a legend that Diocletian, aiming again at the sovereignty, was executed by the Senate's order. There *may* be this grain of truth in the story, that the Senate joined in Constantine's reprobation of the old man's absence from the wedding.

been taken which was the fulfilment of his own interrupted policy of reform. It may have been a slight comfort even to his miserable end, that he had seen the Edict of Milan.

FINIS.

APPENDIX.

EXCURSUS I.

On the details of the First Edict, Feb. 24, 303.

Let us first check off our authorities.

Eus. hist. eccl. VIII. ii. 4, and *mart. Pal. prolog.* 1.	*Lact. mort.* 13.
(1) τὰς μὲν ἐκκλησίας εἰς ἔδαφος φέρειν	
(2) τὰς δὲ γραφὰς ἀφανεῖς πυρὶ γενέσθαι	
(3) καὶ τοὺς μὲν τιμῆς ἐπειλημμένους ἀτίμους	(3) *ut religionis illius homines* (a) *carerent omni honore ac dignitate;* (b) *tormentis subiecti essent, ex quocumque ordine ac gradu uenirent; aduersus eos omnis actio ualeret; ipsi non de iniuria, non de adulterio, non de rebus ablatis agere possent;*
(4) τους δὲ ἐν οἰκετίαις, εἰ ἐπιμένοιεν τῇ τοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ προθέσει, ἐλευθερίας στερεῖσθαι (in mart. Pal. στερίσκεσθαι).	(4) *libertatem denique ac uocem non haberent.*

A. It is evident that Lactantius omits the provisions numbered (1) and (2), not because he was ignorant of them, but because practically they were embodied in his previous chapter, in which he has described what took place the day before the Edict appeared. It is however barely possible (as Hunziker p. 164 suggests), that, as the work of destroying the Church and Books was already *done* at Nicomedia, these two provisions were omitted in the publication of the Edict there.

B. Lactantius evidently intends his account only for a rhetorical description of what the Edict contained, not for a literal version of it: whereas Eusebius has almost undoubtedly used some of the exact language of the official document. This is shown by his careful repetition of identical words twice over. It follows from this that we may safely say, that the phrases in Lactantius which I have marked (a) and (b), only express in full the Eusebian *ἀτίμους* (infames). They are a mere paraphrase, setting forth the horrid consequences of *infamia*.

C. We now approach the crux, viz. the interpretation of *τοὺς ἐν οἰκετίαις*.

(i) First of all, *τοὺς ἐν οἰκετίαις* is evidently used in opposition to *τοὺς τιμῆς ἐπειλημμένους*. Now *τιμὴ* does not mean simply rank, but *official* position, whether in the civil or military service. The natural antithesis to "officials," is "private persons:" therefore, if we can get that meaning out of *τοὺς ἐν οἰκετίαις*, we must adopt it. For supposing the phrase to mean "slaves," we have clauses directed against officials and slaves, but none against ordinary burghers; which seems absurd.

(ii) I maintain, that even in the *Egyptian* darkness of Eusebius' style (it was said to spoil any one's style to reside, as Eusebius for some time did, in that country) *τοὺς ἐν οἰκετίαις* cannot be simply an equivalent for *οἰκέτας*, far less for *δούλους*. The word *οἰκετία* means, and is here a translation of, *familia: οἱ ἐν οἰκετίαις* means *ii qui in familiis sunt*,—not graceful Latin certainly, but plainly signifying "those who live in private households." Now in private households there lived not *only* slaves, thank goodness, but free men too, both as masters and as servants: therefore in the phrase *τοὺς ἐν οἰκετίαις* itself, there is nothing which forbids the paraphrase "private persons," which is (I take it) what Valesius meant when he translated the expression by the word *plebeii*.

(iii) But in fact, though the words *τοὺς ἐν οἰκετίαις* standing alone might *include* the slaves who formed part of the household *as well as* the masters and free servants, in this place the slaves are definitely *excluded* by the context. *Στερεῖσθαι ἐλευθερίας* means "to be deprived of liberty," neither less nor more. But a slave has no liberty; and a man cannot be deprived of what he does not possess. Mosheim, Neander, and Hunziker, therefore, follow Ruffinus' blundering version: *si quis seruorum permansisset Christianus, libertatem consequi non posset*, which has the support (such as it is) of Nicephorus' bold cutting of the knot (vii. 3): *τοὺς οἰκέτας ἐξομνυμένους ἐλευθερίᾳ τιμᾶν*:—certainly if freedom were so nearly in the poor creatures' hands as all that, they could almost be said to be "deprived of freedom" when they preferred their spiritual liberty. Neander (vol. I. p. 262) suggests (perhaps for amusement) the only way in which *ἐλευθερίας στερεῖσθαι* can be taken if the persons spoken of are slaves,—and even *it* puts a little violence upon the

word ἐλευθερία,—"to put in the round-house." The simplest interpretation therefore in every way is to suppose free men in private stations to be meant: and this would seem to be reinforced by Lactantius' addition of the word *uocem*, for slaves had even less of a *uox* than they had of *libertas*. Zonaras, like a sensible man, writes boldly (xii. 32): τοὺς δὲ τύχης ἰδιωτίδος ὄντας δουλοῦσθαι.

(iv) Heinichen *ad locum* contends that the persons intended are the free servants of the imperial courts. He has a strong support (which he has not observed) in the Edict of Valerian, upon which this Edict was based; for there, there was a clause specially devoted to the *Caesariani*. But certainly *Eusebius* does not so mean, for we should surely at least have had τοὺς ἐν ταῖς οἰκετίαις, though I concede that he may have misunderstood the Latin, in which no definite article was possible. If, however, so special a class had been aimed at, would Lactantius have been content with his general *religionis illius homines*, which would have been so very misleading with regard to the extent of the doom of enslavement?

(v) We should expect *a priori* (though Mr Hunziker laughs the notion to scorn), that if private gentlefolks were to be punished at all, it would be with slavery; that as officials fell through two social stages, first, deprivation of office, and then, of civic rights, so private persons would fall through two social stages, first, deprivation of civic rights, and then, of liberty.

(vi) But the question seems to me settled when we find that, as a historical fact, private gentlemen of good family, and not only *liberti*, *libertini*, and *Caesariani*, were enthralled. This will be seen at once by a glance at Eus. uit. Const. II. xxxiv. or at page 185 of the present volume, where that passage is quoted.

EXCURSUS II.

Diocletian's Marriage Edict of 295.

This document is found in the Codex Gregorianus, column 31* of Hänel's edition. It is here given as a specimen of the Emperor's moral feeling, and of the strong practical turn which his religion took: and also of the state of public morals at the time. The translation cannot aspire to much grace of literary style: but nothing can be heavier than the edict-Latin of the period.

"Forasmuch as all the pure and earnestly righteous constitutions of Roman law appear to our devout and religious apprehension in the highest degree venerable and to be preserved scrupulously for all ages, we feel that we must not shut our eyes to the detestable and immoral deeds which have been committed in the past by divers persons: and if these practices are to be checked, or punished either, the public order (*disciplina*) of our times bids us at once be up and doing. For we cannot doubt that thus, and only thus, will the Immortal Gods themselves continue favourable and well-pleased, as they always have been, towards the Roman name, if we princes take heed that all who live beneath our sway cultivate duly, in every point, a devout and religious, peaceable and moral life. And herein we have deemed it a special matter for care, that, by the religious and lawful contracting of matrimony according to the order of antient right, provision should begin to be made, not only for their honour who now profess the marriage yoke, but for them too who then will be born without scandal to religion, and thus by being honourably born our whole posterity may be made purer. For our fatherly affection has determined strictly, that the holy names of relationships shall henceforth hold, among those who should be a man's nearest and dearest, the devout and scrupulous affection which is kinship's due. For it is hideous even to believe (*nefas enim credere*) those things, which are proved to have been committed by divers in time past, how in the undiscriminating manner of beasts and cattle men have rushed into unlawful wedlocks by the mere impulse to exercise their passions without any regard for decency or piety. Notwithstanding, whatever trespasses have been heretofore committed in the way of unlawful matrimonies, by the folly of the delinquents or through their ignorance of law, in a manner worthy of atrocious savages, albeit such trespasses deserve the most severe chastisement, yet, in regard of our mercifulness, we are willing to let them obtain our

pardon; always provided, that whoso have already in bygone days defiled themselves with unlawful and immoral marriages, should understand that they have so far gained our indulgence, as that (after such detestable crimes) they may congratulate themselves on their *lives* being granted them, but should understand also, that the children whom they have begotten in so detestable an alliance are not legitimately born. Thus it will come to pass, that in future also no one will dare to give ear to his unreined concupiscence, when he knows that his predecessors in that branch of crime have been acquitted and allowed life only on one condition, viz., that their children whom they have unlawfully begotten, may never be their heirs, which according to antiquity was forbidden by Roman law. And (alas) we could have wished indeed, that neither aforetime had any such thing been committed, which needed either to be pardoned with mercy or reformed by law! But hereafter, we mean religion and morality to be regarded by every man without exception in the contracting of marriage, that men may remember that they have to do with Roman order (*disciplina*) and Roman laws, and may understand that only those wedlocks are valid, which Roman law permits. And with what relatives, as well by marriage as by birth, matrimony is not allowed to be contracted, we have given a schedule in our Edict: with daughter, granddaughter, great-granddaughter, also with mother, grandmother, great-grandmother: collaterally, with father's or mother's sister, with sister, sister's daughter, sister's granddaughter: also of relatives by marriage, with step-daughter, step-mother, mother-in-law, daughter-in-law, and all those which were forbidden by antient law, from which we mean that all shall abstain. For our codes maintain nothing which is not moral and venerable: and the Majesty of Rome has only arrived (by favour of all Heaven) at this great sublimity, because all her laws are clenched by a wise sense of religion and a deferent heed to purity. Wherefore, by this our Edict, we would have it known to all men, that the amnesty for the past, which our mercy has bestowed in apparent contradiction of public order, only applies to those delinquencies which have been committed up to the 30th of December in the Consulship of Tuscus and Anulinus. And if any offences against the honour of the Roman name and the sanctity of the laws are detected, after the above-named day, they shall be lashed with condign severity. Let no man calculate that he will be able in the case of so detestable a crime to win mercy, who does not hesitate to plunge into an offence which is so clear, and that after our Edict.

"Given at Damascus, on the 1st of May, in the Consulship of Tuscus and Anulinus."

EXCURSUS III.

The Epistle of Saint Theonas

from which the reader may judge, whether the Christian *Caesariani* were likely to burn Diocletian's palace, and whether Diocletian was likely to suspect them of a conspiracy against him.

"Theonas, Bishop, to Lucian, Provost of the Chamberlains to our most puissant Prince.

"I. I thank our Almighty God and Lord Jesus Christ, who hath not ceased to blazon abroad the faith of Himself through the whole world as the one remedy whereby we are saved, and to enlarge that faith even in the persecutions of tyrants. Nay, by the storms of persecutions, it hath glowed the brighter, like gold purified in the furnace; and the truth and the loftiness thereof hath grown ever more and more dazzling, so that peace being now given to the Churches by grace of a good Prince, the works of Christians shine even before the unbelievers, and thereby God, your Father which is in heaven, is glorified: and that is what we, if we wish to be Christians in deed and not in words,—ought to seek and desire as the principal thing for our salvation's sake. For if we seek our own glory, we strive after a mutable and perishable thing, that doth but bring our own selves to death; but the glory of the Father and of the Son, who for our salvation was nailed to the Cross, maketh us safe unto an eternal redemption, which is the most earnest expectation of Christians.

"Therefore, my dear Lucian, I neither suppose that thou dost, nor would I have thee, boast thyself because through thee many in the Prince's palace have come to the knowledge of the truth; but it behoveth thee rather to render thanks to our God, who hath made thee a good tool for a good work, and hath put thee in a proud place with the Emperor, that thou mightest diffuse the sweet odour of the Christian name to His glory and the salvation of many. For in regard that an Emperor, not actually as yet enrolled in the Christian religion, hath entrusted his life and his person to the care of Christian men as being more trusty than others, by so much ought ye to be the more solicitous, and the more diligent and thoughtful for his safety and his wants, that by that means the Name of Christ may be glorified to the utmost, and the faith of Him through you that cherish the Emperor, may be daily

added unto; and forasmuch as many of his imperial predecessors have in other days supposed us to be malicious and fulfilled with all iniquities, now, seeing your good works, they may have no choice but to glorify Christ Himself.

"II. And so ye must strive with all your might, that ye may never have conscience of any base or dishonourable (I need not say, of any wicked) thing; lest through you the Name of Christ be contrariwise blasphemed.

"Far be it from you to *sell* to any one at a price an audience of the Emperor; or that any prayers or bribes should make you in any wise to suggest to the Emperor dishonourable things. Let all heat of covetousness depart from you, which worketh rather idolatry than the religion of Christ. To a Christian, no dishonest gain, no *double* dealing, can possibly be in character: he embraceth a simple, naked Christ (*nullum turpe lucrum Christiano, nulla duplicitas conuenire potest, qui Christum simplicem et nudum amplectitur*). Let no low jesting nor foul speaking pass among you. Let all things be performed with modesty, courtesy, frankness of manner, exactness, that in all things the Name of our God and Lord Jesus Christ be glorified.

"The offices whereunto ye are severally appointed, these fulfil in all the fear of God and love of the Emperor, and with exact diligence. Any commandment of the Emperor which doth not offend God, ye must believe to have proceeded from God Himself: perform it as much for love as for fear, and with all pleasant mirth. For there is nothing which so sweetly refresheth a man that is wearied with great anxieties, as a familiar servant's convenient mirth and kindly obedience: and again on the other hand, there is nothing that moveth him to such vexation and maketh him so uncomfortable, as that servant's gloomy looks and disobedience and secret murmuring. Let these things be far from you Christians, which walk in the zeal of faith: but in order that God may be honoured even in you, crush down and trample out all faulty ways, whether of mind or of body. Be clothed without with patience and courtesy; be filled within with the virtues and hopefulness of Christ. Endure all things, for your very Creator's sake: submit to all things, conquer and overthrow (*uincite et supplantate*) all things, that ye may win the Lord Christ. These things are great and toilsome; but, he that striveth for a mastery, abstaineth from all things, and they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.

"III. But because, as I understand, ye are attached to diverse offices, and that thou, O Lucian, art called the Provost over them all, and by the grace of Christ which is given thee art in authority both to dispose and to instruct them all; I am certain thou wilt not be displeased that I should tell thee concerning these offices a few things

that I shall feel, particularly and by heads. For I hear that one of you keepeth the Emperor's privy purse; another the wardrobe and the imperial jewellery; another the precious plate; another, the library,—though I understand that this officer is not yet chosen from among the believers; and others, other parts of the household goods. In what way then I think these things ought to be treated, I will briefly indicate.

"IV. He that controlleth the Emperor's private moneys, let him keep a strict entry of all: let him be ready at any moment to give a clear account of all; let him write every item down, even, if possible, before paying the money away; let him never trust his memory, which, being every day distracted in many several directions, easily trippeth, so that, if there be no writing, we may sometimes, in perfect good faith, affirm those things to be which never were. Nor should this writing be of a common sort, but such as clearly and easily shall show everything at a glance, and may leave the mind of the examiner without scruple or perplexity. And this may easily be done, if all that is received be entered in distinct columns, as, description of the thing received, and at what time, and through whom received, and at what place: and in like manner what hath been paid out to others or spent at the Emperor's command, let this be registered apart in its own due arrangement. Let that man be a faithful and wise servant, that his lord may rejoice that he hath made him ruler over his goods, and may glorify Christ in him.

"V. Nor will he show less diligence and care, which hath charge of the robes and the imperial ornaments. He should have them all in a most accurate catalogue, and must note therein, *what* there are, and of what quality, in what places they are stored, *when* he received them and from whom, whether they be injured, or not. All these things he must keep under his own diligent eye; often look over them again, often handle them well, that he may recognise them more easily; all must be well to his hand, all quite ready. Let him be able to express with perfect clearness (i.e. to his subordinates), the Emperor's mind or his own Provost's mind, in any matter, and at any moment that they may enquire; and yet so that everything may be done with humility and mirthful obedience, that Christ's Name be praised even in a small matter.

"VI. In the same way let him deal, to whose care are entrusted the vessels, of silver, gold, crystal or myrrha, whether for eating or for drinking; let him arrange, and catalogue all; let him count, with his own care, how many precious stones there are in them, and of what kind; con them over with great wisdom, bring them all out in their proper places and occasions: to whom he giveth them, and when, from whom

he receiveth them back, let him very carefully observe, lest a mistake or an evil suspicion should arise, with all the more disastrous result because the things are precious.

"VII. He however will have the chiefest place among you, and must be the most diligent, to whom the Emperor shall commit the charge of the library. This officer he himself will chuse according to his well-approved knowledge in the matter: he will chuse a grave man and one fitted for serious work, and ready to answer all enquiries; even as Philadelphus on that principle chose Aristaeus his most confidential chamberlain for this business, and set him over the magnificent library, and sent him also an ambassador to Eleazar with great gifts for the translation of the sacred Scripture: and this was the man that writ at large the story of the Septuagint Translators[1]. If therefore it happen that one of them which believe in Christ should be called to this office, let him not, on his part, spurn the secular literature and gentile genius, which charm the Emperor. He may praise the poets for the greatness of their genius, the subtlety of their imaginations, the propriety of their expression, or their consummate eloquence; may praise the orators, and the philosophers too, according to their kind; may praise the historians, who unfold the roll of past events, the manners and customs of our ancestors, and the rise of our institutions, who show us the rule of life out of the acts of the antients. Sometimes also he shall make it his endeavour to praise the Divine Scriptures, which, with wondrous diligence and at a most lavish cost, Ptolemy Philadelphus caused to be translated into our tongue. Now and then the Gospel and the Apostle (the common name for the Epistles) shall be quoted with praise, and quoted as Divine Oracles. The mention of Christ will be able to come up. Insensibly His alone Divinity will be unfolded. All these things, with the help of Christ, might well come to pass.

"That man then shall be acquainted with all the books which the Prince shall possess; he shall often turn them over, and arrange them seemly in their own order according to the index or catalogue. If he shall cause new or old books to be copied, let him be at pains to have the most correct originals: or, should this be impossible, he may set learned men to correct them, and pay them a fair price for their pains. He must also see that old manuscripts be repaired, and adorn them, not so much with a superstitious belief in costliness, as with a view to solid, useful ornament. Therefore, he must not aim at having whole volumes written on purple vellums and in letters of gold, unless the Emperor shall specially demand it: though all that is pleasant to Caesar, he will execute with the greatest obedience. He will suggest to the Prince, according to his opportunity, and with all deference, to read

[1] This knowledge of Alexandrian matters (and indeed the whole tone of this judicious literary advice) are unmistakeable indications what Theonas was the author of the letter.

those books, or to hear them read, which are convenient to His Majesty's rank and dignity, and that are more for improvement than for mere pleasure: but he himself must know them through and through beforehand, then (not too often) quote them with praise before the Prince, and set forth appropriately the testimony and authority of those who approve them, that he may not seem to lean only upon his own feelings.

"VIII. They which have the care of the Emperor's own person, must be in everything as nimble as can be, of countenance (as we have said) always cheerful, sometimes droll, but ever with perfect modesty; *that*, indeed, is it which in you all the Emperor ought to admire above every thing, and understand that it is entirely a fruit of the religion of Christ. And all of you also be clean and neat in your person and your raiment, yet marked by no extravagance or affectation, lest Christian modesty be put to shame. Let everything be ready at the right moment, and arranged to perfection in the right place. Be there order among you, and heed, lest by some means there should arise confusion in work or loss of things. Let the parts of the house be arranged and garnished seasonably according to the purpose and dignity of the place.

"Moreover, let your own slaves also be most respectable; let them be staid and modest, and entirely conformable unto you; whom instruct and teach in all true doctrine with the patience and charity of Christ: but if they neglect your instructions and make light of them, cast them away from you, lest their naughtiness by any means recoil upon you. For masters maligned through the wickedness of their servants we have sometimes seen, and have often heard thereof.

"If the Emperor visit the Empress (*si ad Augustam accesserit Princeps*), or she him, then be ye also perfectly staid, in eyes, and carriage, and in all your words. Let Her Majesty see your self-restraint and modesty. Let her ladies and her maids see it; yea, let them see, and admire, and thereupon praise our Lord Jesus Christ in you. Let your speech be alway frugal and modest, and with religion 'seasoned' as 'with salt'. Jealousy betwixt you let there be utterly none, or contention, which should lead you into all confusion and division, and thus bring you at last into hatred with Christ and with the Emperor alike, and into the deepest abomination, nor should one stone of your building be able to stand upon another. And thou, most beloved Lucian, seeing thou thyself art wise, suffer fools gladly, that they also may become wise.

"Never offer ye an unkindness to any man; move none to anger. If an injury be put upon you, turn and look to Jesus Christ; and as ye desire that He may pardon you, so do ye forgive them, and thus also shall ye overturn all jealousy of you and bruise the head of the Old Serpent, who lieth in wait with all cunning craftiness against your good

works and your prosperity. Let not a day pass, but that when a convenient season is given, ye read something out of the sacred Lessons, and meditate thereon. Never, never cast aside the literature of the Holy Scriptures: nothing so feedeth the soul and enricheth (*impinguat*) the understanding as do the sacred Lessons. But let this be the principal fruit ye reap therefrom, that in your patience ye fulfil your duties righteously and dutifully,—that is, in the charity of Christ; and that ye despise all transitory things for His eternal promises, which indeed pass all human knowledge and understanding, and will lead you into everlasting felicity.

"My dear Lord Lucian, farewell, with all good luck in Christ."

EXCURSUS IV.

The Passion of Saint Theodotus.

The perusal of this one document will, I think, convey a better idea of the Persecution, than the study of many learned books. The pictures of Christian life and customs, belief and superstition, especially in country places, are invaluable; as also the notices of the apostate Theotecnus and his ways.

"I that have proved the great lovingkindness of the holy Martyr Theodotus towards myself, am his debtor not only to praise in words his conflict, but by deeds also to requite his charity: albeit I can neither enough honour the Martyr with deeds, nor speak of him with such words as were meet. Yet after my ability and power, it beseems me to set forth the favours done me by him, according to my slender means, offering publicly my pair of mites with the Widow in the Gospel. For I feel it a sheer necessity to bring to the knowledge of the devout his life and conflict, and how, having from earliest youth devoted himself to shopkeeping, he came thence at last to martyrdom. Yet I confess I dread lest, being untutored in speech, slight in knowledge, small in learning, I should not do justice to the conflicts of the Martyr, and his constancy in the conflicts, by attempting a theme too big for my strength. For it will be a great detriment inflicted by contemptible genius on choice matters, if any one should esteem them to be but such as my telling of the tale will make them out. Some will here cast it in my teeth, that the Martyr embraced the ordinary manner of life, nor severed himself from the enjoyment of pleasures, but lived with a wife united to him in lawful wedlock, and practised a shopkeeper's trade for the sake of gain. But his final conflict of martyrdom made his earlier life also illustrious, decking the first things with the last. Therefore let each man say his say: I that lived with the Martyr from the beginning, shall say what I know and did prove with my eyes, to wit, the constancy of him whose company and conversation I was vouchsafed for my own edification.

"But before he stepped down to the uttermost conflict of martyrdom, on many and divers occasions he had made proof of his valour, like a wrestler that will strive with his adversary. And first he determined to wage war against his desires; and made so great progress toward virtue, that he might have been all men's master. For never did he enthrall himself to pleasures or to any impure affection, but from his earliest boyhood he brought forth noble fruit of beautiful self-discipline, which also the latter end of his life did prove. But above all he took to himself for

shield in the battle temperance, as the ground or beginning of all other good things, supposing the chastisement of the body to be the sweets befitting a Christian man, whose riches and glory it is generously to suffer lack. I indeed have oftentimes seen an heroical man overpowered with covetousness (not indeed of wealth, but) of glory; philosophy beaten by fear, and a kindly quiet soul unmanned with delights: only the righteous man makes his passions minister to him as to their master. He had, therefore, for his service against pleasures the habit of fasting, against easiness of the body temperance, and against superfluity of wealth the custom of distributing his own goods to the poor. And these things we shall show by and by more particularly, and shall make it apparent, that he obtained glory by shame, opulence and affluence by noble poverty, and through temptations and snares earned Heaven for his own.

"This man converted many from iniquity, by seasonable instruction curing them as from a pestilent disease; many who in body appeared sound but were afflicted with a soul beset by evil thoughts he healed by his discourse, yea by his admirable doctrine and exhortation he brought into the Church a vast company of heathens and of Jews. For indeed his trade of shopkeeper, unlike the manner of most, was by him held in no great esteem in comparison of his office of a Bishop; while after his power he succoured those that had suffered wrong, was in pain with the sick, with the afflicted shared their sorrow, was himself partaker of others' sufferings and replete with charity. The first thing that you may admire in him is that he would lay his hands on persons bound with diseases how incurable soever, and delivered them from their sickness, using his prayers in the place of medicine. Libertines he persuaded to continence, and those that were given to too much wine he recovered from their drunken habits. Some also, who seemed to be possessed irremediably with the plague of avarice, he induced by his warnings to believe that poverty was a thing to be desired, and to lavish their property upon the poor. Out of this school of his not a few are reckoned, who, for Christ's sake, not only scorned reproach but even a most dreadful death. Equipped by conflicts such as these unto his last conflict, this singular champion of religion suggests the narration of many an admirable passage, which I covet to set forth in order, himself aiding me with his prayers and showing the succession of the events. Now then, let us make a start upon the theme we have taken in hand.

"One Theotecnus by name, obtained the government of our native country, a busy, meddling fellow, heady, with a natural bias for cruelty, malicious altogether, rejoicing in slaughter and blood, an apostate from the faith (*desertor pietatis*), in every regard detestable, one whose wickedness I cannot set forth better in any other words than by saying that it was the sole merit whereby he obtained the administration of so fine a city. For he had promised the Emperor, already at war with the Church, that were he once entrusted with the government of this region,

he would soon bring over all the Christians that were here to his own impiety. This fellow, before he ever came into our country, so affrighted all the devout by the mere fame of his approach that the fulness of the Church was made desolate, and the wildernesses and mountain tops were choked with fugitives. Such terror came upon all as if a judgment from Heaven were hanging over every head. His way was, to send messengers before him, one after another, to declare openly the worst counsels of his mind. Scarce had the first shaken the dust off their feet, before new ones overtook them, declaring the implacable sternness of his inhumane disposition. And then, once more, a third set brought in their hands edicts testifying the plenity of the authority he was charged withal, wherein it was bidden that all the Churches wheresoever situated, together with their Altars, should be levelled with the ground, the Priests dragged to the altars of the idols, and there be first forced to sacrifice and then compelled to forswear their religion: if any should contradict the commands, their properties were to be given over to the Emperor's exchequer, themselves and their children shut up in prisons, to be kept till the President came to punish them,—that is, so long a time that, overcome with previous bonds and stripes, they should bring to the inquisition in store for them hearts already broken.

"Rumours of this kind being gotten abroad, foretelling everywhere the impending calamity, the Church was like a ship tossed with winds and storms, wherein you might see everything turned bottom upwards while she herself feared to be sucked under by the waves of persecution. The counsel of the wicked (floating as they were over the bottomless gulf of their own destruction) was discussed in revellings and drinking-parties: and not being able to sustain the excess of their own prosperity, drunk with overmuch malice as with strong wine, the unbelievers did, and suffered too, all that insane and raving persons do. They broke into houses for no apparent cause and plundered whatever came in their way, neither durst any of the injured parties cross them, for if any spake but a word to thwart them he was put on trial for contumacy and insubordination. When therefore the ungodly edicts were thus set forth, and all the chief of the brethren, bound for safety with irons, were kept fast in prison, not one of the Christians was seen in public; their houses were openly ransacked; their friends betrayed; their religion suffered calumny; free-born women and virgins were violated shamelessly by lewd persons, nor could anyone who saw it tell to the full how sorely the Church was agitated. There was no place of safety even for them who fled, and the Priests had retired from their Altars, relinquishing the portals of the Churches; and whilst their goods were exposed to be plundered by the ungodly they were bestead with that which was worse than any punishment, famine. For wandering through all the wilderness, and keeping in holes and caves where any could find a lurking-place, they could not long endure their hunger, so that many gave themselves up to be taken, supposing that they

should find pity. To them that fled flight itself was a grievous evil; specially to the gentlefolks, nourished in all affluence, who, aforetime in need of nothing, now hardly lived on roots and weeds.

"Meantime, all alone, Theodotus (glorious Martyr!) maintained the fight for the Ordinances of God, confronting many a peril. He did not, as say some, drive his trade of victualler for lucre's sake, for the amassing of money, but with much industry bethought him how that shop of his might become a haven of salvation to those who suffered persecution, and prepared himself for the common security of all. 'Twas hard work he had with the devout who were kept in custody; and all the while he strove to maintain the wanderers who had fled, or to protect the slain from the wicked. For the bodies of them who had been murdered with many tortures, were cast out for a prey to the dogs; and if any man was found looking to their burial, he was put to the same punishment; for the bitterest of deaths was appointed for those that buried them. Now, who should suppose that such piety lay hid behind a counter? Well then, that righteous man's house was not only a victualler's shop, but a calm haven of religion to those who took refuge there, and also a fortified castle for those who there prayed in secret. Using the pretext of a victualler's trade as an occasion for practising piety he remained a good while unobserved; and according to the advice of Blessed Paul he became all things to all men who suffered persecution, physician to the sick, nourisher to the weak in body, to those that were ill off for lack of victuals confectioner and drawer, and a master to those who adorn an honest life with zeal for godliness. He would nerve for the bearing of tortures those who were led captive, and those placed before the altars he would exhort for Christ's sake to embrace death, so that one might very well say that he was the preceptor of all that at that time were crowned with martyrdom. But, by the bye, I have not as yet called attention to a certain noteworthy piece of behaviour in our Martyr: I had almost forgot it; but yet it ought never to pass unnoticed by one that writes of him.

"The Devil's agent, Theotecnus, had ordered that every species of human victual should be defiled with things offered to idols, specially the bread and wine, so that not even to God the Lord of all might the Oblation be offered pure: and he had formally appointed priests of falsehood to make that their business. Now 'twas imperative (as all know) to offer to God gifts without blemish. Well, for this most offensive device our Martyr quickly invented an antidote, being mighty industrious in the cultivation of virtue. Whatever he had bought from Christians in the first instance he sold to Christians again for the Oblation that must needs be made. Thus that shop of his was to the faithful what the ark of Noe was once to those who were saved therein in the time of the Flood. For like as then (when utter destruction stalked abroad over the whole earth) there was no means to find salva-

tion if one moved never so little from the ark, because all the earth was under water, so in our town not a Christian could be saved outside the Martyr's domicile. So the tavern was turned into a house of prayer, into a spital for travellers, into an Altar where the Priests might offer holy gifts; for all fled thither like shipwrecked men to their boats. *That* was the gain to the righteous man of being a victualler; *that* the fruits of his business to the Martyr: and 'twas a well-known thing to the observers of religion that the victualler's shop was to those in jeopardy a most commodious haven. And now, of this enough, that I may bring other deeds of his also into my tale.

"It fell out in those days, that one Victor, a friend of the Martyr's, was seized and taken into custody by the wicked for the following cause. Certain of the priests of Diana accused him of saying that Apollo had offered an outrage to his own sister Diana before the altar in Delos, and that the Greeks ought to be ashamed of such wantonness, to have a god who did a crime that not even men durst commit. Victor being thus accused, the heathens came up to him, cajoling him and saying: 'Obey the President, and you shall be treated with much distinction, you shall be a friend of the Emperors; they'll make a rich man of you, and you shall go in and out of their palace; but should you not obey the President, we beg leave to tell you that bitter torments wait for you, and extermination is in reserve for your whole house. Your property will be thrown into the exchequer, your entire family will be blotted out, and your corpse (after excruciating tortures) will be thrown out for dog's meat.' This and much else like it the ungodly said to Victor; but that confessor of religion, Theodotus, entering the prison by night, comforted him with these words: 'The sole care of Christians ought to be the purity of their life, the integrity of their conversation and a mind confirmed in true religion. The possession of these things is rarely found; it is difficult of attainment, and therefore comes to few.'

"Again the blessed Saint addressed him as follows:

"'Let me beg of you not to listen to those damaging and profane discourses with which these abominable men assail you. On no account accept their persuasions or leave us to follow them, preferring libertinism to continence, unrighteousness to righteousness, to religion irreligion. On no account Victor, on no account. However flattering the promises of the wicked, the ruin they involve is as certain. Was it not with promises of this kind that the Jews cheated the traitor Judas? It was no gain to him that he had received his thirty pieces. The value of these pieces went for the burial of strangers; while he himself hung and swung in the wind, with nothing more than a halter for his money's worth. Such promises lead no whither save to eternal death.' With these and similar words this righteous man emboldened Victor. His friend remained constant, and bore the beginning of his torments generously enough, and on that account was applauded by his spectators,

so long as he kept in mind his master's exhortations. But when he had well-nigh reached the termination of his race, and was on the point of receiving his crown from the Saviour, he demanded of the tyrant a short armistice for deliberation. At this sound the lictors in a moment ceased to belabour him, supposing that the man had proved a defaulter from his creed. Victor died in the prison from his stripes, leaving the issue of his confession ambiguous, and from that day to this his memory remains beneath the doubt.

"But now let us describe another conflict of our Martyr. There is a village near the fortieth milestone from this city, named Malus. Thither, by the providence of God, in the time of persecution came Theodotus our Martyr, at the moment when the reliques of the holy and glorious Martyr Valens (him who had passed away among the Medicoes, through many tortures first, and finally by fire) had been tossed into the eddying waters of the river Halys; which reliques he carried away. He had come, however, not into the village itself, but some way lower down, to a certain cavern with an Eastern prospect, out of which leaps the stream of the Halys. The distance of the place from the village is a matter of a couple of furlongs. Now there (so God had ordained) it came to pass that he met with certain brethren, who greeted him and loaded him with expressions of gratitude, as the common benefactor of all the distressed, and called to mind in detail their own obligations to him: how, not long before, they had been arrested by their own kinsfolk, who were in some hurry to put them in the Prefect's hands because they had overset an altar of Diana, and the Saint, by monstrous exertion, and at no small cost, had at last (and that but hardly) got them out of their bonds. He, supposing his meeting with these persons to be a magnificent windfall, desired them to give him their company at his meal, and so prosecute their journey.

"While they were lying on the sward—for there was much grass at the place, and trees standing round, as well fruit as woodland trees, with the fragrance of every variety of flower, and grasshoppers and nightingales singing a charming serenade to the dawn, and the tuneful notes of many kinds of warblers, and in short all those sweets with which nature can adorn a solitary spot—while they, I say, thus reclined upon the sward, the Saint despatched certain of his company into the village, to invite into their presence the Clergyman, to take his breakfast with them, and to fortify those who had to travel with the usual prayers before a journey. For our Saint had never been wont to take a meal without a Priest's benediction. So when the envoys were come into the village, they lighted upon the Parson, coming out of Church after the hour of prayer, the sixth hour. He, seeing them worried with dogs, in all haste ran up, and sending the curs about their business, greeted them, and begged that if they were Christians they would step into

his house, where they might enjoy their mutual charity in Christ. They answered: 'Christians we are indeed, and rejoice to meet with Christians.' Then the Parson, laughing quietly, said within himself: 'Alack Fronto! (for that was his name) the visions which present themselves to you in sleep are at all times clear enough. But that which I saw last night, why, 'twas simply prodigious! I saw two men the very match of you, who told me that they brought a vast treasure into this country. Wherefore now that I have my eyes upon you, the very men which I saw in my dream, look you now, give me that treasure over!'

"'To be sure,' replied the men, 'we have with us one preferable to any treasure, to wit, the Martyr Theodotus, whom, if you please, you shall see, a person of great eminence for religion. But be kind enough, good father, to show us the Priest of this village.' 'Well, well,' said he, ''tis myself am the man you are looking for. But it were better that we should fetch him home hither to us; for it is not seemly that any one should sojourn in the woods, in a place where there are Christians.' Thereupon he went, and kissing our Saint and the brethren, he desired them to make a party and all come together into his house. But he excused himself, for the reason that he was in haste to return to the metropolis. 'For,' said he, 'there is a great field opening there for the saving of Christians; and the brethren ought to help those that are in need.' So after they had taken their repast, that champion of Christ, with a smile, said to the Clergyman, 'How suitable a place I see for the receiving of holy reliques! why are you not stirring?' 'Nay,' replied the Parson, 'be you at the pains to put me in possession of some to make a stir for, and then tell me I am a sluggard if you dare.' (He spoke of the bringing of holy reliques.) 'For,' quoth he, 'first get your reliques, and then think of beginning to build.' Then said our Martyr, 'Our work it shall be, or rather God's work, to endeavour strenuously to supply you with the reliques; and your work to prepare diligently the sacred house. Wherefore I beseech you, good father, not to be slothful in the business; but to see that you accomplish it with the greatest possible despatch. For the reliques will very shortly come.' And so saying, he drew from his finger a ring, and gave it to the Priest, and said: 'The Lord be witness between me and thee, that thou shalt be provided with reliques not many days hence:'—indicating, doubtless, that *he* either should be sent by some other man, or should come of himself; for he hasted to finish the course of his conflict. Having set him his task, he departed from those regions, and came into the city, where he found everything overthrown as with an earthquake.

"There were seven Virgins, trained to virtue from their earliest years, and taught to value chastity above all other things, and to have the fear of God before their eyes. The tyrannical judge, having taken these ladies into custody, and having failed even by application of many torments to win them over to denial of God, at length, boiling over with anger, and willing

to do an injury to religion, ordered them to be consigned to the ravishing embraces of hot-blooded youths. Accordingly, they were sent off to certain young men, to suffer (so it was supposed) an abominable wrong; where, deeply groaning, and lifting their hands and eyes to heaven, 'O Lord (they cried), Jesu Christ, Thou knowest that whilst it was in our own power to keep our maidenhood undeflowered, we did so very diligently even to this day: but now our persons are put into the power of these immodest striplings!' They were still uttering these and similar outcries with supplications and tears, when the senior of their number, Tecusa by name, was haled aside by one of the lads, who seemed more unabashed than the rest. She, weeping, and holding him by the feet, exclaimed: 'O my son, what can you gain from me? what pleasure is there in the embrace of forms wasted away, as you see, by old age and fasting, by sickness and the rack?' She was, in fact, already past her seventieth year, and the rest were of a hardly less advanced age. ''Tis altogether unseemly,' she cried, 'for you to be enamoured of what I may already call dead flesh, which you will soon see torn to morsels by the beasts and birds. For the President has already decreed that we are not to merit even a grave. Let us alone, and receive instead the gratitude and great rewards of the Lord Jesus Christ.' Thus she addressed the young fellow with tears; then suddenly rending her veil in two, she showed him the white hairs of her head. 'And pay reverence,' cried she, 'to these hairs, my son. For aught I know, you too may have a gray-haired mother: let her (be she yet alive, or be she dead) come and help us to crave your forbearance. Leave us miserable wretches to our weeping: and take the hope that our Saviour Jesus Christ will recompense you; for no hope is vain that is reposed in Him.' No sooner had Tecusa spoken thus, than the young fellows, quite cured of their passionate ardour, themselves dissolved in tears, and departed in hearty compassion for the Nuns.

"Theotecnus, however, hearing that no violence had been offered them, abandoned the design of plaguing them further in the name of evil pleasure; and ordered them instead to be made priestesses of Diana and Minerva, whose business it was to wash the effigies of those divinities every year (such was the usage) in the neighbouring lake. The anniversary of the washing of the idols was just at that time coming round: and, necessity claiming that each of the statues should ride upon its own carriage, Theotecnus ordered the Nuns as well to be taken to the pool, and washed in the same fashion as the idols. Accordingly they conducted the ladies thither, standing upright and undressed in cars as a butt for shame and mockery. After them rode the idols: and with them marched forth the rabble of the entire city, to witness the coming spectacle. Interspersed among them were to be seen and heard the noise of pipes and cymbals, and companies of beldames which footed it about with dishevelled locks, like a crew of Bacchanals. Great was the noise

of the feet tramping upon the ground, and the din of the musical instruments: and that was how the idols rode. And for this cause the concourse of the populace was large; but much enlarged because of the punishment of the Nuns. Some pitied their years, others admired their constancy, not a few applauded their modesty; but all eyes filled with tears to see them half dead with scourging. And among the rest went forth that generation of vipers the President Theotecnus.

"Meantime, God's Martyr, Theodotus, was troubled with deep anxiety for each one of the holy Virgins, dreading lest any of them (as might well be feared with the weaker sex) should faint in the conflict. He besought God therefore with many prayers, to help them in their struggle. Now for this purpose he had shut himself up in a little cottage near the Confession (or Confessors' Chapel) of the Patriarchs, which belonged to a certain poor man named Theocharis. With him were Polychronius, who was nephew to the Martyr Tecusa, and a younger Theodotus, the son of his own sister, and several other Christians, gathered into the same small cell. They had all lien there in prayer from morning prime to the sixth hour, when the wife of Theocharis brought word that the bodies of the Nuns had been sunk in the lake. At this announcement, our righteous man raised himself somewhat from the ground, and still kneeling on his knees, spread out his hands heavenwards, and wet with a copious shower of tears, 'Thanks,' cried he, 'my thanks I offer Thee, O Lord, that Thou hast not allowed my weeping to be in vain.' Then he inquired of the woman, in what fashion the Virgins had been sunk below the surface, and in what part of the lake, whether in the midst, or near the margin. She, who had gone forth with the other women and had been present on the spot, made the following reply: 'Theotecnus argued and promised, and argued and promised, but in vain; for Tecusa repelled him with exasperating words. The priestesses also of Diana and Minerva, when they offered them the garland and the white raiment, in which they ought to have assisted in ministering to their devils, were in like manner rejected with reviling. The President then bad them hang stones about their necks, and embark them on a small shallop and row them out to a spot where the lake was deeper: and so they were cast into the water at the distance of four or five hundred feet from the shore.'

"This heard, our Martyr held himself close where he was, until sundown, taking counsel with Polychronius and Theocharis by what device they could have the dead women out of the pool. Now about the setting of the sun, there came a stripling to them while they debated, to signify that Theotecnus had ordered soldiers to stay by the lake to keep watch over the corpses. Then the Saint was seized with an extraordinary grief; for it was apparent that the sacred bodies would be very hard to recover, not only because of the soldiers who kept them, but because of the weight of the stones, each one of which was almost more than a wain could move. So when it was dusk Theodotus' comrades stayed where they were; but he went out

to the Confession of the Patriarchs; and when he found the door blocked up by the ungodly to stop the ingress of the Christians, he threw himself on his face without, in prayer, beside the Font, and so stayed a considerable while. Then he went forward to the Confession of the Fathers; and finding this too obstructed, he prostrated himself there also, in prayer. Then, hearing a great noise behind him, and believing there were some fellows on his track, he turned aside to the dwelling of Theocharis. When he had there slept a little space, the blessed Tecusa appeared to him, and said: 'Do you sleep, son Theodotus? have you no concern for us? and do not you remember the exhortations with which I instructed you when you were younger, and led you to virtue so that your parents marvelled? Truly, while I lived you never slighted me; you treated me like a mother; but now that I am dead you have forgotten that you ought to minister to me even to the last. Pray do not allow our dead bodies to lie under water and be eaten up with fishes: for, only two days, and the great conflict waits for *you*. Up, then, get you to the pool; but beware of the traitor!' So saying she retired.

"Then rising from sleep he told the vision that had been vouchsafed him to the brethren, who all showed him sympathy and besought God with tears that he would deign to help him find the bodies. Day dawned; and they despatched that young man who had first brought word that soldiers were waiting stationed by the pool to keep the corpses (the young man was a Christian himself), in company with Theocharis, to make a careful research what was become of the soldiers: for they suspected that they had withdrawn because of the feast of Diana, which the ungodly that day kept. Therefore Theocharis and Glycerius (that was the young man's name) went, and brought back the news that they were still on guard. So, that day again, they kept close. Now, when it was dusk, they went out towards the marsh fasting, carrying sharp scythes along with them, with which they meant to enter the water and sever the ropes tied around the drowned ladies' necks. The night was very dark, so as no moon nor stars were seen. When they reached the place at which the criminals are tortured,—a horrible place and one which no one durst enter after sunset, for there in a row stood heads chopped off, or spitted upon stakes, or lay scattered about and singed with fire—they were seized with no slight quaking of heart. But they heard a voice say: 'On boldly, Theodotus!' Horribly frightened again, each one made the Sign of the Cross upon his brow, and soon there appeared to them a brilliant Cross in the East, which seemed to emit a fiery ray. At this apparition their fear was mixed with joy: and they bent their knees, and worshipped toward the place from whence the Cross appeared.

"The prayer over, they rose and began their journey again; but the night was so dark that they could not see each other. This incommoded them enough; but in addition there was a violent storm of rain, which caused deep mud everywhere; and the mud made their footing slippery,

and barely permitted them to advance a step on the forward journey; and thus, in the darkness, their fear was equalled by their difficulty. They stopped again therefore to pray, beseeching God in their necessity to afford them aid. Suddenly there appeared to them a blazing torch, leading the way; there appeared also two men, clothed in shining garments, with hoary hair and beard, and saying: 'Courage, Theodotus! Our Lord Jesus Christ has written your name among the Martyrs, and has heard your prayer which you poured forth with tears concerning the finding of the dead bodies: and we have been sent by Him, to take you into our hands: and we are they who are called the Fathers. Moreover, when you come to the pool, you will see Saint Sosander, all in armour, striking panic into the watch. But you are wrong to have brought a traitor with you!'

"So, following the light which appeared to them, they came to the pool, and it served them until they had taken away the holy reliques. And this was how they did it. There came much lightning, and thunder, and rain, and so violent a wind fell upon them that the men set to watch the bodies thought best to run away. The tempest was not the sole cause of their flight, but also a vision which alarmed them. They saw a tall man armed with shield and breastplate, helmet and spear, from which fire shot out in every direction. It was the holy and glorious Martyr Sosander. Terrified with the look of him, they took to their heels, and got to some cottages near. Now the water, driven by force of the winds upon the shore, had so far receded, that the bottom appeared all dry and the Nuns' corpses lay to view. They cut the ropes with their scythes, took them up and laid them on their beasts, and carried them to the Chapel of the Patriarchs, where they buried them in a tomb hard by. The names of the Virgins are these: Tecusa, Alexandra, Phaena (these three the Apotactites claim as belonging to their order, as indeed they did), Claudia, Euphrasia, Matrona and Julitta.

"When day came the whole city began to be in an uproar for the stealing of the sacred bodies, for the report was soon known to all. And so, as soon as ever any Christian was caught sight of, they had him into Court. Many being thus taken up, and like to be torn in pieces as it were with the teeth of wild beasts, our Saint got wind of it and would have given himself up, but the brethren restrained him. But Polychronius, changing his coat and making a country clown of himself, went off to the Forum to find out the whole truth more clearly. Some, therefore, soon had hold of him and fetched him to the President, who beat him soundly and threatened him with death into the bargain, showing him a drawn sword. He yielded to his fear, and confessed concerning the reliques of the Virgins, and that Theodotus had taken them from the lake; and he named the place where he had hid them. So they took the holy dead out of their sepulchre and burnt them up. Then we knew that Polychronius was the traitor, and that it was of him they spoke who

had appeared, when they said: 'Beware of the traitor.' And some told our Martyr of Polychronius, and that the reliques of the Virgins had been burnt.

"Then Christ's glorious Martyr, Theodotus, bidding adieu to the brethren, and charging them not to cease from prayer, but to pray God that he might obtain his crown, got himself ready to endure stripes. So they persisted together in prayer with the Martyr, who prayed at great length and said at last: 'O Lord Jesu Christ, Hope of the hopeless, grant me to finish my course of conflict, and to offer the shedding of my blood as a sacrifice and a drink-offering on all their behalf who suffer affliction for Thee. Lighten their load, and calm the tempest, that all who believe in Thee may find rest and deep tranquillity.' As he thus wound up his prayer with tears, there arose a great wailing among the brethren, embracing him and saying:

"'Farewell, Theodotus, thou loveliest light of the Church! When thou departest from these worldly miseries the heavenly luminaries will receive thee, and the multiform glory of Angels and Archangels, and the immutable splendour of the Holy Ghost, and our Lord Jesus Christ sitting at the right hand of His Father. For the contest awaiting thee for these blessings' sake will be a glorious and great contest; but for us who remain in uncertainty, thy departure from life produces nothing but grief, and wailing and groaning.' When they thus lamented, our Saint embraced each one, and warned them that when the blessed Father Fronto should come from Malus, bringing his ring with him, they should give him his own reliques if they could make a shift to filch them away. And so saying, he fortified his whole body with the Sign of the Cross, and strode to the arena with a spirit undaunted.

"Now as he went, there met him two of the townsmen, who bad him get back again as fast as ever he could, and said: 'Pray save yourself.' For they were acquaintances and friends to the Martyr, and thought to do him a kindness: 'Because,' said they, 'the priestesses of Minerva and Diana with a mob of the people are accusing you to the President, for persuading all the Christians not to adore inanimate stones: and they have a variety of other slanders to say against you: and Polychronius is preferring an indictment against you for conveying the bodies away by stealth. While therefore there is yet time, save yourself, Theodotus. It would be folly to give yourself up gratuitously to tortures.' 'If,' replied the Martyr, 'you suppose yourselves my friends, and wish to do me a favour, be good enough not to annoy me or to tax me for my zeal. Nay rather, go to the magistrates, and say: "Theodotus, the object of the accusations of the priestesses and the whole city, is standing before the doors."' So saying, he went before them, and presented himself to his accusers. Entering to the tribunal, he stood there intrepid, and with a smile on his countenance eyed the torments ready for him. There was a lighted fire in the place, and

boiling caldrons, and wheels, and many other instruments of torture displayed: but the sight of them all was so far from affrighting our Martyr, that his mind's constancy was expressed even in the mirth of his countenance.

"Theodotus, seeing him stand by in this fashion, said: 'Not one of the tortures displayed before you shall you taste, if you will let yourself be persuaded to be wise and sacrifice. You shall have an amnesty for all the crimes which the whole city and the priestesses have shown us concerning you. More than this; you shall enjoy friendship with us such as others cannot share, and shall go forth with the love of our most puissant Emperors, and shall be deemed worthy to be vouchsafed letters from their own hands, and (if so matters go) to write to them. There is but one condition. Forswear that Jesus, whom Pilate, once a judge like us, crucified in Judaea. Determine with yourself to play the sensible man. You look like a man of experience: and a sensible man ought to act discreetly and warily in all cases. Withdraw, then, Theodotus, from every folly; and dissuade other Christians too from their madness. So doing, you shall rule over the whole city, in the capacity of priest of Apollo,—the greatest of all the gods for the great benefits which he confers on men, by predicting the future in his oracles, and by healing diseases with his art of medicine. *You* shall have the ordering of the priests; *you* shall dispose of preferments; you shall be the channel through whom petitions come to the magistrates on behalf of the country, and shall present deputations to the Emperors on public occasions. Together with power, riches will flow in to you, the patronage of your nation, and great honours with glory and renown. Or else if you desire possessions, and it would please you to have them, I am at your service, and will place them at your disposal.' At this speech of the President, loud congratulations were heard from the crowd, which praised Theodotus' good luck, and persuaded him to accept the proffered good offices.

"Our Martyr meantime answered Theotecnus in the following manner: 'First of all, I demand of my Lord Jesus Christ (whom you have just mentioned with contempt as an ordinary man) the grace to refute your error concerning the gods, and briefly to touch upon the Miracles of my Lord Jesus Christ and the Mysteries of His Incarnation. I must therefore prove my faith in Him, Theotecnus, in deed and word by many testimonies. For as for the deeds of your gods, it is a shame even to speak of them; nevertheless I will say on to your confusion. That one whom you call Jove and take to be the greatest of all gods, proceeded to so great lengths in his outrages upon women and children as to be himself both the original and the final development of all that is bad. Your own poet Orpheus says that Jove slew his own father Saturn, and had to wife his own mother Rhea, of whom was born Proserpine; and with her too he fell in love. And after that, he took his sister Juno;

and Apollo did but follow his example when he offered violence to his sister Diana before the altar in Delos. Precisely in the same way, Mars was passionately enamoured of Venus, Vulcan of Minerva, brothers and sisters both. Do you see, O Consular, the foulness of your gods? Would not the laws punish a man who had done such deeds? Yet all the while, you glory in these criminal passions of your gods, and do not blush to adore beings who sin against the innocence of youth, and the sanctity of marriage, and against life itself. Your poets have spoken of these things with exultation.

"'On the other hand, concerning the power of our Lord Jesus Christ and His Miracles, and the Mystery of His Incarnation, Prophets and spiritual men have told us a multitude of things; but all such as none would blush to confess aloud, all perfectly chaste: signifying how in the last days He appeared from Heaven among men,—with marvellous signs and unspeakable miracles, healing the diseases of the sick, and making men worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven. And of His Incarnation the Prophets wrote accurately beforehand, and of His Death and Passion, and Resurrection from the dead. And the Chaldees and Magi, the wisest of the Persians, are witnesses thereof; for led by the motion of the stars, they both discovered the time of His Nativity after the flesh, and also were the first to offer to the God, whom they had discovered, presents as to God. Many and stupendous were the miracles He performed. His first was the changing of water into wine: with five loaves and two fishes He satisfied five thousand men in the wilderness: He healed many sick persons with a word, and walked on the sea as on dry land: even the nature of fire acknowledged His supremacy, and at His bidding the dead arose, and at His word alone the light shone upon those who were born blind: He caused the lame to walk and run, and recalled to life men who had been four days in the tomb. Who could describe in human language all the signs and wonders which He did, and by which He proved Himself to be God, and not some ordinary man?'

"While the Martyr thus spoke, the whole multitude of the idolaters was stirred, like a sea swept with a vehement wind;—priests rending their garments, letting their hair float abroad, and tearing off their garlands; the people shouting aloud, and even accusing the Proconsul Theotecnus himself, because he would not treat as an outlaw a man guilty of stripes and death, who openly blasphemed the clemency of the gods, and made so impudent a flourish of his oratorical skill. They said that he ought at once to be hoisted upon the hobby-horse and to pay the due satisfaction to the deities. Theotecnus therefore, in still greater exasperation, and boiling over with wrath, commanded his satellites to lift the Saint immediately upon the block. Nay, he himself in his fury leapt down from his judgment-seat, eager to bear a hand in the torturing of the Saint. And while the multitude of the

people surged to and fro, and the hangmen were getting their hooks ready, and the criers were shouting loudly, and the air was full of confused sound, our champion alone stood there with a tranquil mind, as if all this confused hubbub was against some other man, not against himself.

"Thereupon no manner of frightful instrument was allowed to lie idle, not fire nor red-hot iron, nor hooks. Some from one side, some from another, they set upon him, tore off his garments, and hoisted the man upon the hobby-horse. Then, dividing themselves into parties, they tore his sides with the hooks: each man went to work with all his might; there was no sparing of pains. But our Martyr fixed his eyes upon his smiters with a joyful and smiling countenance, and without the least dismay endured the pain of the torments without even a wry face, and without blenching from the tyrant's cruelty. For he found his helper in our Lord Jesus Christ, so that at last those who beat him were fatigued. When these were exhausted, another party took their place. But our unconquered champion had delivered up his body to the executioners as though it were not his own, keeping his mind fixed upon the Lord of all. Theotecnus next ordered a very strong vinegar to be poured over his sides, and blazing torches to be applied to them. The Saint was stung with the acid, and perceived the horrible savour from his own burnt sides, and turned his nostrils a little on one side. Then immediately Theotecnus sprang down from his throne, and, 'Where is now,' he cried, 'the pride of your language, Theodotus? I see you are well-nigh beaten: you cannot bear these tortures. To be sure if you had not blasphemed the gods, and would have worshipped their might and power, these torments would never have befallen you. I should advise you (for you are but a petty shopkeeper and of low condition) not to talk on as before against the Emperors who have power to destroy you.' Our Martyr answered, 'Never mind, Sir Consular, because you saw me turn my nose away when I smelt my flesh roasting, but rather bid your satellites fulfil their orders. I observe that they are backward. And you, bethink yourself of new torments; invent fresh engines to try my fortitude withal: and yet no! rather recognise that the Lord Jesus is helping me. Through Him I scorn you like any slave, and I look down upon your ungodly Emperors. Such spirit the Lord Christ gives me. Had it been a criminal whom you had taken into custody, fear would have found some place in me; but now I do not dread your threats: I am ready to bear anything in the world for the faith of Christ.' While he spoke thus Theotecnus bade them bray his cheeks with stones, and knock his teeth out. In reply our Martyr cried: 'Even should you cut my tongue out, O Theotecnus, and all the organs of speech, yet God can hear a dumb Christian.'

"At last when the lictors were weary with scarifying his body, the

President ordered him to be taken off the block, and shut up in prison on remand for a further investigation. Theodotus was then taken through the midst of the market-place, with his whole body beaten into one mass, but by his very wounds showing that he had won the day. As the citizens ran together from every side to see the sight, he invited them to recognise from his sufferings the mighty power of Christ. 'See, all,' he cried, 'how admirable is Christ's power: how to those who expose themselves to torments for His sake He grants immunity from pain, and makes the body's weakness too strong for fire, and causes men of the lowest rank to hold cheap the threats of princes and the edicts of Emperors against religion. And indeed, without accepting persons, to all alike the Lord of all affords this grace,—to the lowly, to slaves as to freemen, and to barbarians.' So, finishing his speech and displaying the marks of the stripes inflicted on him, 'Seemly it is,' he said, 'for those who believe in Christ to offer unto Him such sacrifices as I have offered, seeing that He first suffered thus for every one of us.'

"Five days had passed by, when Theotecnus ordered a court to be prepared for him in a conspicuous place in the midst of the city, and commanded his officers to fetch our Martyr thither. It was done speedily and willingly. As he approached, he addressed him thus: 'Come close to me, Theodotus; quite close; for I hear that you have learnt wisdom by what we did the other day, and are better now, and have thrown away your former pride. And, to be sure, it was contrary to all reason to bring upon yourself such agonies in spite of all that I could do. Now then that you have put away your barbarous obstinacy, you must acknowledge the sovereignty of the almighty gods, in order that you may enjoy our good offices which I promised you before; for I am quite ready to perform my promise when you have sacrificed to the gods. Perceive what is for your good. For otherwise, you observe, there is fire ready; the steel is sharpened; the wild beasts are yawning and gaping for their murderous work: and if you have a fancy to try them, in comparison with these later tortures, your first will seem to you like shadows.'

"The Martyr, nothing terrified, answered: 'What, O Theotecnus, will you invent against me so great that the power of Jesus Christ my Lord cannot resist it? My whole body is broken in pieces, as you see, by my tortures of the other day, and yet you may make a new proof of my steadfastness: apply your various torments to my limbs, and you will see how strong they are to suffer pain, although they appeared but the other day to be all but dismembered.'

"Then Theotecnus ordered them to fasten the Saint again upon the block. The lictors took their posts on either side, and began like wild beasts to examine the places of the former wounds, and to thrust their hooks as deep as possible into his sides. And all the while our glorious Martyr with a loud voice professed his faith. So the President, seeing that his labour was in vain, and his tormentors weary and flagging,

ordered him to be taken down off the block and laid out upon heated potsherds. And when they pierced deeply into his body, Theodotus, feeling the keenest anguish, began to pray: 'O Lord Jesus Christ, Hope of the hopeless, hear my prayer and assuage this agony, for it is for Thy holy Name that I suffer it.' Theoteenus therefore perceived that even the experiment with the potsherds was of no use for his purpose, and ordered him once more to be lifted and hung upon the hobby-horse, and his former wounds to be again opened. But the Martyr showed no consciousness of the body; the lictors seemed to him to be dealing not seriously, but in play. Only his tongue remained uninjured and glorifying God; for the ungodly were willing to preserve that, to serve him for denial, not knowing that they left it for the confirmation of the truth.

"At length Theoteenus, seeing that he was unable to invent new tortures enough, and that his agents were now so utterly exhausted as to be disabled for further work, while the Martyr was stronger than ever in his resolution, passed sentence upon him. 'Theodotus, the ringleader of the Galilaeans, enemy of the gods, who will not obey the Emperor's orders, and despises me also, is condemned by our authority to undergo the penalty of the sword, and his beheaded body to be burnt with fire, that the Christians may not take possession of it and bury it.' His sentence passed, there went out with the Martyr the whole multitude of men and women desiring to witness his end. When they arrived at the place the Martyr began to pray after these words: 'O Lord Jesu Christ, Maker of Heaven and earth, who never forsakest them that hope in Thee, I give Thee thanks that Thou hast made me a meet citizen of Thy heavenly city and a partaker of Thy kingdom. I give Thee thanks that Thou hast given me power to overcome the Dragon, and to bruise his head. Give rest to Thy servants, and in me cause the violence of the enemy to stay. Grant peace to Thy Church, snatching her from the tyranny of the Devil.' When he had finished his prayer and added his Amen, he turned and saw the brethren weeping, and said, 'Weep not my brethren, but glorify our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath made me to finish my course and to overcome the enemy. From henceforth I shall pray to God for you, with confidence, in Heaven.' And having said this he received the sword with gladness.

"Then they built an enormous funeral pile, and the lictors cast upon it the body of the holy Martyr, heaping much fuel round about it. But by a certain dispensation of God who watches over men, there suddenly appeared over the pile a light gleaming this way and that way, so that not one of them who were to kindle the fire durst approach it. And so the sacred body remained within the pile uninjured. Now when his servants told this tale to Theoteenus, he bade them stay on the spot, in the place where the head was laid, and to keep watch over the body. So there the soldiers stayed as had been commanded them, to keep guard. Now there came to that same place, according to agreement,

the Priest Fronto, bringing the ring of the holy Martyr, which he had given him as a pledge for his reliques, having also with him a beast laden with old wine. For that most excellent personage pursues the trade of agriculture. So, coming to the city about eventide, by the provident will of God the ass fell down upon the spot where lay the body of the holy Martyr. Seeing this the watch ran up, and said to the Priest: 'Whither are you going, stranger, so late of the evening? Nay, you had better come and stay with us, where your ass shall graze at large. For look you, here is grass in plenty; and if you should please to turn her into the crops, there is no one to say us nay; while for yourself 'twill be better to stay with us than to be put about with the incivility of a tavern-keeper.' So the Priest turned his ass out of the road, and entered into the hut which they had built for themselves the day before, by weaving wisps of straw between upright stakes of willow. Now hard by the hut lay the body of our Martyr, buried beneath a heap of branches and of hay. There was also a fire lighted near at hand, and supper laid ready. Then the leaders of the band, returning from bathing to the hut, fell a drinking, lying down upon carpets spread out upon the ground over hay. So they invited the Priest also to come and drink with them. He, asking for a cup, unladed his ass: and filling the cup with his own wine, said, 'Taste and see what kind of wine this is. Maybe you will not think it amiss.' So saying, and smiling modestly, he gave into their hands the cup full of wine. They all admired its scent and its flavour, and asked the old man how many years old it might be. The Priest asserting that 'twas five years old, 'Go to,' said they, 'let's be drinking presently; for very thirsty we are.' Then said the Priest, 'Take and be merry,—as much as ever you can drink.' One of the youths, by name Metrodorus, laughing, answered: 'I never shall forget it in all my life,—no, not if I should take that draught of Lethe which they talk of. All the Christians put together have not received so many stripes as I have tasted the last day or two, because of the taking of those women out of the pond. So now, stranger, do not stint us; pour plenty of that strong Maronian, that I may drink forgetfulness of my pains.' Then Fronto answered; 'Young man, I know not what women you speak of, but I know that the spring of Maro is not far away.' 'But,' said another, whose name was Apollonius, 'take you heed, Metrodorus, lest that cup of Maro that you speak of beget you a great mischief, you that have been ordered to keep watch over that man of brass, who stole the women you mention out of the pond.'

"The Priest replied: 'Well to be sure, I made a mistake not to bring my interpreter with me, to explain to me your conversation, for I do not understand anything of what you have said thus far. What women were they that were taken by stealth from the lake? Or who is that brazen fellow that you say you are watching? Have you brought some statue all this way to keep? Or are you talking in conundrums to make your-

selves merry with my country ignorance?' Metrodorus would have answered, but another, called Glaucentius, prevented him, and said: 'Good stranger, do not think any of my mates' sayings strange. When they called him a man of brass, they were not an inch from the truth. For whether they called him brass, or whether they called him iron, we know that he was harder and tougher than brass or iron or anything else in the world. Why, brass and iron melt with fire, and are shaped by art: even what they call adamant is overcome by industry and cleverness. But this fellow—they applied fire, and knives, and hooks, but they might have spared their pains.' 'Even now,' replied the Priest, 'I do not clearly follow what you mean,—whether (that is) you are speaking about some person, or some sort of thing.' Glaucentius answered: 'I can scarcely explain to you, stranger, the thing's nature. For if you call it a man, never man fought like this. To be sure, all know that he was our townsman. His house and his family and his possessions all are here. But, that he had not a human nature, that's flatly proved by his very works. For he was beaten, and cut, and burnt with fire all over his limbs, and yet never answered a word to his tormentors, but persisted firm in his first determination, just as a rock buffeted with the waves stands without swaying one way or other. The man's name was Theodotus: he was a Christian by religion, and could not be moved from his resolute self-will by any efforts. There were seven Nuns drowned in this lake, who were ordered to stay under water; but he took them away privily and had them buried. And when he learned that in consequence many Christians had been taken up and delivered to the magistrates to be punished, he was afraid they would deny their faith, and so presented himself uninvited to the magistrates, and confessed that it was his doing, for fear others should be tortured in his stead. And although the President promised him untold wealth and dignities and honours, even so as to offer him the chief pontificate if he would sacrifice to the gods and forswear the Christian religion, he laughed the magistrates to scorn, heaped contumely upon the gods, despised the laws of the Emperors, and deemed the President unworthy even of an answer. When he had been well threshed, and had borne tortures of every kind, he seemed to suffer nothing from his stripes, and told us so himself. He laughed at his beaters, and mocked them for being sluggardly and slack, and rated the President like some vile slave. When those who tortured him grew tired, he became (I do believe) the stronger for his torments, and sang hymns, until at last his head was taken off, and he was ordered to be burnt with fire. But we, unlucky wights, fear to be put to pain yet again for his sake. For when the pile was lighted, there happened wondrous things about that fire, which no words can express; and we saw a light of vast dimensions, and the flame would not touch Theodotus. So we have been bidden watch the fellow, because of the Christians.' And so saying, the youth showed the Priest the spot where the body lay.

"Then Fronto, understanding that it was none other than Saint Theodotus himself, gave thanks to God, and prayed that His good hand might be with him for conveying away the corpse. Full of gladness, he plied them with more and more of the wine, and invited them to take of it more and more liberally, until they were dead drunken and fell into a heavy sleep. Then the Priest rose up; and lifting the venerable form, he laid it upon his ass, and said: 'Hark ye, Martyr! fulfil those promises you made me:' and therewith he slipped Theodotus' ring upon Theodotus' finger. Then he arranged the branches and the hay again, as they had lain before upon the Saint's body, that the watch might not suspect that anything had been taken away. Now when the day dawned, the Priest arose, and began to search for his ass as if lost, and made a great ado and noise, clapping his hands, and lamenting, and crying, 'I have lost my ass, I have lost my ass!' So the watch believed him to be speaking in earnest, not knowing what had happened: for they supposed that the holy body still lay beneath the hay. But the ass, being led by an Angel, got away through devious places to Malus, and lay down with her burden upon that spot, where now stands the Confession of the holy and glorious Martyr Theodotus. So some of the village came, and announced to the Priest, that the ass, all alone, of her own accord, had brought the sacred reliques, and had stayed at the spot. Therefore the Priest who lamented for his lost ass returned to Malus, while the guards abode where they were, thinking the body to be still under the hay. And such was the way that the reliques of our glorious Martyr were translated to Malus, under the marvellous care of God, who thus glorified the Martyr's conflict.

"All these things I, the humble Nilus, have delivered with great care to you, brethren beloved of God: who was with him in the prison, and know perfectly each point which I have brought to your notice, everywhere being zealous for the truth; that you too, hearing these things with all faith and certainty, may have your part with the holy and glorious Martyr Theodotus, and with all the Saints who have striven for godliness' sake in Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom is glory and power, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, for evermore. Amen."

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

A.D.		
283	Dec. 21	Death of Carus.
284	Sept. 17	Death of Numerian, and election of Diocletian.
285	May 1	Elevation of Maximian.
292	April 1	Creation of Caesars (Constantius and Galerius).
302	——	The Triumph.
303	Feb. 23	First Edict of Persecution.
„	March?	Second Edict of Persecution.
„	Dec. 21	Vicennalia; Third (Amnesty) Edict.
304	April 30	Fourth Edict, issued by Maximian.
305	May 1	Abdication of Diocletian and Maximian.
306	July 25	Death of Constantius; Constantine Caesar.
„	Oct. 27	Usurpation of Maxentius: the Persecution ceases in the West.
„	Nov. 8	Diocletian sentences the Sirmian Masons.
307	Nov. 11	Congress of Carnuntum: Downfall of the Tetrarchy.
308	March 31	Edict against Manichaeans.
„	spring	Mutilation substituted for Death, under the possible influence of Diocletian.
„	autumn	Fifth Edict: Reign of Terror.
309	autumn	Lull and Relapse.
310	——	Suicide of Maximian.
311	April—May	Toleration and Death of Galerius.
„	October	Maximin closes the Cemeteries.
312	June?	Permits the Towns to prohibit Christianity.
„	November	Edict of Milan: Maximin's second rescript to Sabinus.
313	February?	Death of Diocletian.
„	May—June	Final Toleration Edict of Maximin, who shortly after dies.

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